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ELEVEN

DISCOURSES,

DELIVERED

EXTEMPORE,

AT

Several Meeting-Houses

OF THE

PEOPLE CALLED

QUAKERS.

BY SAMUEL FOTHERGILL.

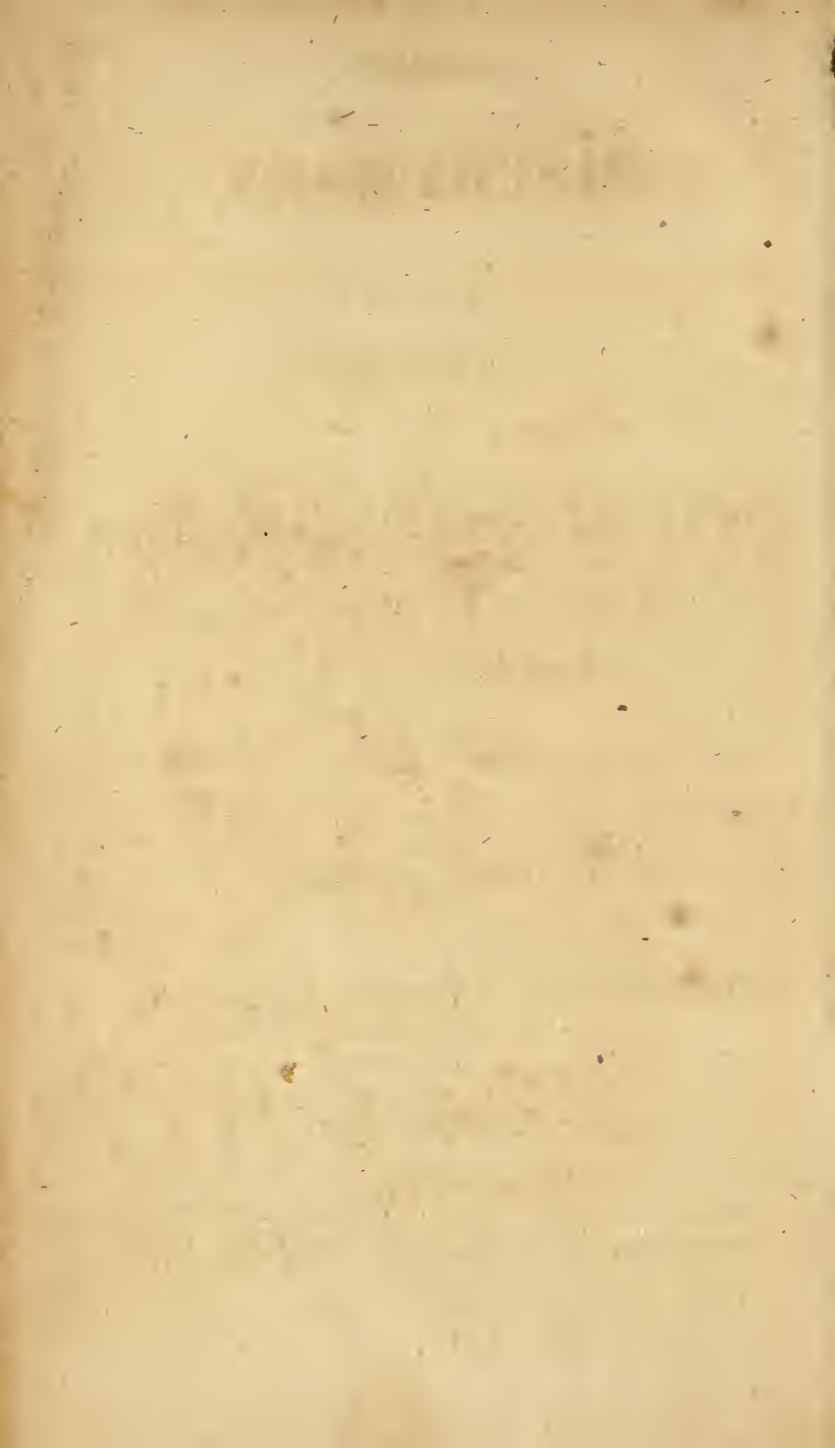
MOSTLY TAKEN DOWN IN CHARACTERS, BY A MEMBER OF THE  
CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

WILMINGTON:

PRINTED FOR, AND PUBLISHED BY, COALE & RUMFORD.

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1817.



THE  
ANNEXED ACCOUNT  
OF THE

**ELOQUENT MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL**

WHO

DELIVERED THE FOLLOWING PATHETIC EXHORTATIONS,

As the Spirit Gave him utterance,

*Appeared in the Gentleman's Magazine for 1773,  
under the signature of*

“ A LOVER OF TRUTH AND VIRTUE.”

TO commemorate the virtues of great and eminent men, who have been honourable in their day, is a tribute due to their memory. A tribute which sensible men pay from emotions of respectful gratitude; and from a hope that it may prove an incentive to the living, to emulate their virtues.

Of this class the late Mr. SAMUEL FOTHERGILL, of Warrington, an eminent preacher among the Quakers, may with great justice be ranked. I knew him well, and had the happiness of his occasional acquaintance; I call it the happiness, because I never enjoyed the company of any person from whom I received more real satisfaction; and however diversified with affliction, the future

part of my life may prove, I shall never remember those hours I have spent with him, but with peculiar pleasure. He was an happy compound of the Gentleman and the Christian; the virtues and amiable qualities of each character, being admirably blended in him. Graceful in his deportment, easy and affable in his manner, he commanded both respect and love: he possessed natural abilities far superior to the generality of mankind, and improved them to the utmost of his power. Well read both in books and men, his studies did not terminate in barren speculation; but the great truths of religion were deeply implanted in his heart, and beamed forth illustriously in a benevolent and truly Christian conduct.

As a member of civil society he was exceedingly useful, filling up the social and relative duties of life with great propriety. Blameless in his manners, kind, charitable, and ready on all occasions to devote his time and talents to promote the best of all causes, the good of mankind.—He lived beloved, and his loss is deeply deplored by all who had the happiness of knowing his worth.

As a preacher, he was far superior to most who fill up that station. Sound in the important doctrines of the Christian faith, he endeavoured to promote them universally, with the greatest energy of language, and the most persuasive eloquence. In this capacity he was truly great; and his greatness received additional lustre from his

humility. Although followed by numbers, and courted by persons of superior rank and station, and admired by those of all persuasions, the applause which his eminence justly acquired, did not exalt, but evidently tended to make him humble. He was a person of an enlarged mind, zealous without bigotry, and a steady promoter of universal charity.

In his sermons, it was evident to all his intelligent hearers, that he deeply felt the force of those solemn truths he delivered; and his manner of displaying them was so justly emphatical, that none but the insensible or obdurate could withstand their force, or remain unaffected by them.

He travelled much, from the most disinterested motives, among his friends in Great-Britain, Ireland, and the American Colonies, for the promotion of piety and Christian virtue, and for the advancement of that faith and religion in which he most surely believed, and was so eminent an example.

*A brief account of Samuel Fothergill, by his  
Brethren in religious profession.*

SAMUEL FOTHERGILL, of Warrington in Lancashire, was the sixth son of our worthy ancient friend JOHN FOTHERGILL, and of MARGARET his wife, for an account of whom see volume the sixth, page 90, of *Piety Promoted*.

This their son being of an active and lively disposition, and during his apprenticeship mostly from under the watchful eye of his affectionate parent, he fled from the holy cross of Christ, and indulged himself in the gratifications of folly and licentiousness; violating the repeated convictions of Divine Grace in his own mind, which had been mercifully extended from his early years, thereby wounding the soul of his tender father (of whose religious care to form and lead the tender minds of his children to piety and virtue, we have an account in the memoirs of his life;) yet his pious admonitions proved nevertheless, as bread cast on the waters, which returned after many days; for about the twenty-first year of his age, the visitation of Divine Love was so powerfully renewed, that it proved effectual to turn his steps out of the paths of vanity; and as he has expressed, with humble and awful gratitude to the Preserver of men, "It then appeared clear to his understanding, that would be the last call the heavenly Father would favour him with;" he therefore consulted no longer with flesh and blood, but gave up to the holy visitation, devoting his whole heart and

affections to seek reconciliation with God, through the mediation of Jesus Christ; and abiding in great humility under the purifying operation of the Holy Ghost and fire, he became thereby qualified for those eminent services he was called into; for in a few months, by the constraining power and love of God, his mouth was opened to bear a testimony to the sufficiency of that holy Arm that had plucked him as a brand out of the fire. Thus a dispensation of the ministry being committed to his charge, he attended faithfully thereto, and moved therein at the requirings, and under the direction of Divine Wisdom, by which means he soon became an able minister of the gospel, called thereto and qualified by the Holy Ghost, under which influence he laboured with diligence, and devoted much of his time and strength, when health permitted, to the service of his dear Lord and Master; for the continuance of whose favours he counted nothing too near or dear to part with, that he might be instrumental in gathering souls to God, which was the object he had in view in all his gospel labours; being diligent himself, he endeavoured much to excite friends to a due and constant attendance of meetings for religious worship, and those for the discipline of the church.

Through the course of his gospel labours, both in public and private, animated by divine love, he expressed an uncommon warmth of affection for the rising youth of this generation, with whom he has been frequently led into a deep brotherly feeling and sympathy for their present and eternal wel-

fare; under which concern, his love to this class of both sexes, under all denominations, was strong and ardent.

He travelled much in this Nation and Scotland, several times in Ireland, and once through most of the North American Colonies, in the service of truth; where, though singularly humbled in a sense of poverty, weakness and insufficiency, on his first landing, he was by accounts received, marvellously strengthened, both in public and private, in gospel authority and love, to the awakening and comforting of many.

Having acquired a moderate competency by his diligence and industry, he declined trade for several years before his decease, devoting his time and talents to the service of the churches. As a pillar in the Lord's house he was stedfast, being actuated by a christian and manly zeal; in deportment grave: his private conversation was savory and edifying, corresponding with his ministry, which at times went forth as a flame, piercing the obdurate, yet descended like dew upon the tender plants of our heavenly Father's planting, the true mourners in Zion, with these he travelled in a deep sympathy of spirit; in his gospel labours free from affectation, in doctrine clear, sound and pathetic, filled with charity, allowing for the prejudices of mankind, being indeed a minister and elder worthy of double honour, speaking whereof he knew, and what his own hands had handled of the good word of life.

*The following are some of the last expressions of this faithful servant, uttered by him a little before his happy entrance into the joy of his Lord ; on the fifteenth of the sixth month, 1772, the fifty-seventh year of his age, and the thirty-sixth of his ministry.*

“ OUR health is no more at our command, than length of days :—Mine seems drawing fast towards a conclusion ; but I am content with every allotment of Providence, for they are all in wisdom—unerring wisdom.

“ There is one thing which as an arm underneath, bears up and supports ; and though the rolling tempestuous billows surround, yet my head is kept above them, and my feet are firmly established.—O, seek it !—press after it—lay fast hold of it.

“ Though painful my nights, and wearisome my days, yet I am preserved in patience and resignation. Death has no terrors, nor will the grave have any victory. My soul triumphs over death, hell and the grave.

“ Husbands and wives, parents and children, health and riches, must all go—disappointment is another name for them.

“ I should have been thankful had I been able to have got to the ensuing yearly meeting in London, which you are now going to attend, where I

have been so often refreshed with my brethren ; but it is otherwise allotted ; I shall remember them, and some of them will remember me. The Lord knows best what is best for us ; I am content and resigned to his will.

“ I feel a foretaste of that joy that is to come ; and who would wish to exchange such a state of mind ?

“ I would be glad if an easy channel could be found to inform the yearly meeting that I have lived, as I shall close, with the most unshaken assurance, that we have not followed cunningly devised fables, but the pure living eternal substance.

“ Let the aged be strong, let the middle aged be animated, and the youth encouraged ; for the Lord is still with Zion ; the Lord will bless Zion.

“ If I be now removed out of his church militant, where I have endeavoured in some measure to fill up my duty, I have an evidence that I shall gain an admittance into his glorious church triumphant, far above the heavens.

“ My dear love is to all them that love the Lord Jesus.”

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# DISCOURSES, &c.

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*A discourse delivered at Bingley, the 3d of the  
Seventh month, 1758.*

THE excellent Proverbs discover the full treasure of religion with its durable riches and honours; and call souls to be true lovers thereof, and to inherit wisdom. From this holy foundation, the riches of all generations have been drawn; and, whenever we are truly enriched, we must derive our treasure from heaven; for, it is the soul that shall inherit glory: and where shall be the production of good but in God? There is, beyond all manner of contradiction, abundance of difference in the natural capacities of mankind; in the various advantages or disadvantages that occur in the opportunities of acquiring knowledge, and the enlargement of the natural understanding; for, so it hath seemed good and right, in the holy wisdom of Him who commands the spirits to enter into all flesh, and appoints even the stars and heavenly bodies to differ in magnitude and glory one from another. But it admits not of the least doubt with me that the Holy One, whose ways are equal (and who, with a solemn assertion, declares, he delights not in the death of them that die) hath formed each of us, however differing in point of capacity or acquired know-

ledge, for glory, honour, immortality, and eternal life, and hath provided means for obtaining this great and universal end. For his will is not our destruction, but our sanctification, our justification, and adoption into glory, that we might each of us be happy here, and eternally happy with him for ever.

That wisdom which calls us to eternal peace, to inherit substance, was with the Ancient of Days before the foundations of the world were laid; as one brought up with him, and was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him. That attribute of the Almighty, which makes him famous and excellent throughout all his name; that wisdom in and by which the universe was formed, and in which it rested completely beautiful, as coming out of the hands of a pure and holy Creator, when the morning stars sung together and the sons of God shouted for joy; this wisdom, in which all God's workmanship was formed, was the great cause of their holy admiration, and the subject of their celestial song. And all that he has created anew, was by the word of the power and wisdom of the eternal Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, who hath revealed himself in former ages, first speaking by the prophets, at sundry times and after divers manners, but more clearly by his own appearance, the glorious manifestation of God in the flesh, the great mystery of godliness. For so it is beyond all controversy, God was manifest in the flesh, seen of angels, worshipped by them, seen of men too, believed on in the world, and received up into glory.

By this manifestation of himself, he hath brought hidden riches to light, hath brought life and immortality to light by the gospel. The treasures hidden from ages and generations, by the gospel, have been revealed, that life and immortality have been brought to light, which had a being throughout all former ages, and was the ancient object of the saints' faith under the old dispensation of the covenant of works, who saw but darkly, and as but in a glass; but it is now more clearly revealed. 'Thou shalt guide me by thy counsel, or by thy wisdom, and afterwards receive me into glory. To rest in hope, even in the holy hope of life and immortality. But in the fulness of time, the rich treasures of eternity were brought to light, and the veil was taken away from before the face of all nations, that they might behold and rest on him, at whose presence the temple shook, when his great and awful concluding work was finished, and he gave up the ghost. The veil was in great measure rent at the appearance of that glorious one, the Lord Jesus Christ, in a greater degree, by that propitiatory sacrifice offered to Eternal Wisdom; but more abundantly at the pouring forth of the Holy Ghost, at the day of Pentecost; when strangers from all parts heard spoken, in their own language, the wonderful things of God.

Now it is this word of God, this wisdom, that was hid from ages, by which the treasures of all mankind have been filled, the rich treasures of all generations, have been replenished. And, as I am fully persuaded, that the greatest part of those

who have fallen from Him, may lay claim to that sacred, that adorable, name of Christ Jesus ; I would advise each particular person, who have made a profession of this glorious and adorable name, to put the question to themselves, what portion of riches they have obtained through a profession of this word of wisdom ? For it stands us in stead to know what we are, before the fatal sentence be passed upon us ; every one must stand before the righteous and just Judge ; for, if Noah, Daniel and Job, who were preachers of righteousness, were with us, in the days of visions, they could only save their own souls. What better am I for my profession of the christian faith ? “ Is my salvation nearer than when I first believed ? ” or (in the ancient language of the apostles to the primitive proselytes to christianity) “ have you received the Holy Ghost since you first believed ? ” It is a query, as meet to be put, and as necessary to be asked, of each one of us, as ever it was since “ life and immortality were brought to light by the gospel.”

I am sensible there are great numbers of mankind who are unbelievers in the gift of the Holy Ghost. In the extension of that great and holy gift, that excellent treasure, Christ in us the sole crown and hope of glory ; and wherever unbelief prevails, in the real extending of this excellent gift, one may say, in the apostle’s language, how then shall they call upon him in whom they have not believed ? Some are pleased to call it presumption, in this day to speak of this gift of the Holy Ghost ; some are ready to say, we have no scrip-

ture for it ; but thanks be to God, we have ; unless they be opened to us by him that had the key of David, we shall never availably profit by them. The unlearned in all ages, down to this day, have been said to wrest the scriptures ; and some have wrested them to their own destruction. But who are those unlearned ? Are they such as are deprived of scholastic education, that have not opportunity of acquiring knowledge and understanding through literature ? No ; for, in the course of my observation, with respect to the sacred truths of the gospel, all must acknowledge they are unlearned, whose hearts are not opened by the key of David, in which are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, which is as “ a lamp to our feet and as a light to our paths.” But where shall we find the learned ? We shall find them amongst the disciples of Jesus, learned in the school of experience, who, out of the good treasure put into their hearts from the ancient Spring of Eternal Riches, are bringing forth things new and old. We shall find them amongst the poor of the earth, frequently rich in faith ; for, the secrets of the Almighty are with those who fear him ; and, the Lion, related in the character of the tribe of Judah, with whom is the key of David, opens the book and unlooses the seals thereof.

I have frequently seen those amongst the lower class of mankind who are the more truly learned ; and it appears to me an improper term, to call men learned in the things of God, whilst they are viciously delighting in iniquity, and are lovers of plea-

sure more than followers after him ; these, however learned, wrest the scriptures as unlearned, even to their own destruction. Therefore let not the meanest amongst you say, that I have not such advantages as others ; I am unlearned, I am in obscurity and darkness, in the necessitous circumstances of life ; and therefore this my situation is cutting me off from those benefits that redound to others, who are in a capacity by acquired knowledge and experience, to form to themselves encouraging apprehensions of these great things of eternal salvation, and of obtaining a share in that wisdom which is unchangeable in its nature, and of everlasting duration. The word of Eternal Wisdom, when he had taken upon him that body (as in the volume of the book it is written of him) he was conversant amongst the poor, they being the people with whom the Heir of all things principally delighted ; for, amongst those he would have conversed with, who were of the chief priests and rulers ; did ever any of them believe in him ? No ; for those thought themselves wise, and sought not to know Him, the Eternal Fountain of everlasting joy. Methinks I would have all nations to consider themselves designed to have a part in the unspeakable wisdom and mercy of God, in the offers of grace, and in the glorious riches of an eternal kingdom, which is prepared for all those who sincerely love him. That they are designed, in abundant kindness, to become heirs with Christ of that glory which is unspeakable ; and, from such a persuasion of mind, be awakened to consider the means which lead to this blessed end. And, in order

thereto, that we may know to whom we appertain, we are told of the absolute necessity of the gift of the Holy Ghost, that even they who have not the Spirit of Christ are none of his.

I would again say, let not a spirit of unbelief, with respect to this holy gift, enter into the hearts of mankind; for I am bold to assert, that if the gift of the Holy Ghost be not continued in this day of Jesus Christ, that great and glorious Light, it is certainly the darkest dispensation that ever yet was amongst mankind: if the sacred Almighty Fountain of Eternal Excellency, does not communicate knowledge, understanding and wisdom, by his Spirit, through the Word of eternal righteousness, the christian world is, above all other dispensations, the darkest and most miserable; for, before the flood, he graciously condescended to converse with mankind about these great truths: he clothed them in their stations with wisdom adapted to their state, when the iniquity of the people was great and exceedingly offensive, which caused him to pour forth upon the earth a deluge of water, that destroyed them; even previous to that, he warned them by his prophets, whom he had made preachers of righteousness. And afterwards, when the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah sinned, when their cries ascended, in heavy piercing profanation of the commandment of God, and entered into the ears of the great Governor of the World, he held, as it were, a consultation; and said, "I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it which is come up

unto me." He warned them from time to time of the impending danger which threatened them : he remembered Israel in Egypt, and regarded them in the wilderness with unspeakable kindness ; he gave them the laws upon Mount Sinai with unspeakable marks of his own communication and excellency : but, when they transgressed against him, he hewed them by his prophets, and slew them by the words of his mouth ; they had the law delivered to them with awful solemnity, and in a manner unquestionably true, to those who were appointed for the application thereof. Moreover he superseded the law that was written by a new train of his holy servants, whom he raised and sent forth ; what for ? To spread the fame and power of religion amongst all mankind, and direct them to the great and glorious end of their being. And shall we conclude, that under the glorious dispensations of Jesus, which hath been ratified and confirmed, not with the blood of bulls or of goats, or with the oblations and sacrifices that were only typical, but with the precious blood of the Lamb, " slain from the foundation of the world," that council, wisdom, and heavenly instruction, should be withheld, or the means of proclaiming afresh, in his gospel, the spirit of life in every creature ? I again say, take away the gift and extension of the Holy Ghost, and we should be more in ignorance and darkness than the ages of former dispensations ; but thanks be to Him who lives forever, we have ground to believe and to be assured, that the dispensation of the gospel, is a dispensation of life through Jesus Christ, and far superior in glory to any that ever was before.

This is the new covenant, even his law that he would put in their inward parts, and write in their hearts, and would be their God and they should be his people; with it he would give them an additional degree of knowledge, access to, and communication with, himself. I do not apprehend it to be a mere enlargement of men's natural powers or reason, that was the gift of wisdom given to the children of men, through the meritorious atonement of Christ; they had the exercise of the rational faculties; they had a capacity and powers of discerning consistent with their state: their conceptions and apprehensions were proportioned to them as the beings of a day; but there seems to be something of a higher nature requisite in that state of light and knowledge, proposed through the gospel of Jesus, which was for the spreading that excellent wisdom which is from above, which is first pure and peaceable, then gentle and easy to be intreated; that wisdom which is divine in itself in all its properties, and gives them power to inherit substance.

We are abundantly told, and it is a truth we can never too much rely upon, that the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal; that the gift of the Holy Ghost was proportioned unto the everlasting eternal interest of man; and hath been communicated to the various classes of men's understandings, that they might be united to him, and learn righteousness; that those who have wandered from the fold of rest, might be brought to Christ, the everlasting Shep-

herd and Bishop of Souls. This is the glory of the gospel of Jesus ; this is that which makes him excellent through all his attributes, and unspeakably glorious throughout his name, “ that he came to seek and save that which was lost, to bring home that which strayed, to bind up that which hath been broken, and to enlighten those who had long sat in darkness, with the glorious brightness of an everlasting day.”

In a just sense of the value of my own soul, and of each particular amongst you, do I speak :— Have you brought your actions to the final decision of unchangeable truth and righteousness ? have you received the Holy Ghost since you first believed ? After what manner is the gift of the Holy Ghost given to the children of men ? What is its first work, what is the first progress that the Holy Ghost makes ? Heaven, earth, sea, and the fountains of water, prompt me to some degree of experience, and I am qualified to answer, from faith, in the query ; for, I am not amongst you without experience, according to my capacity, and I speak forth the things which mine eyes have seen and looked upon, not in a transient view ; but what my hands have handled of the good word and power of eternal life, I proclaim amongst you. After what manner did the Holy Ghost operate on its first appearance amongst the children of men ? Why, in the same manner that it did upon the world in the work of the creation, when it was first and originally formed : for at the production of divine power, in the wonderful work of creation,

the word was "let there be light," and there was light. He said, and it was done; he spoke, and it came to pass. And, in this gospel day, this glorious dispensation of grace and mercy, the word is, "let there be light," to enlighten their understanding to give the knowledge of themselves, that it might shew to us that whatever seeming dignity we may be willing to assume, whatever mistaken views we have taken of ourselves, however comely we may have appeared, in delusive apprehensions, yet, in the sight of Him who created all things, the people of all nations, and the numberless hosts on high, whilst in our natural states and circumstances, we are but void and without form: not yet instampt with that divine and celestial image, which is only capable of celestial glory.

Whatever degrees of understanding and of natural knowledge; whatever perfection of human wisdom, and experience, and accomplishments of profession; O man! O woman! to what length soever thou hast attained, thou art still the creating work of Eternal Wisdom; he hath furnished thee with all these perfections and powers for a noble purpose, and hath furnished thee with a capacity for those glorious views of eternity, and the excellent frame that abides for ever. Thou art "without form, and void," although there may be some seeming production that may strike thy fancy and flatter self-love, yet I fear thou art deficient and without form and void. But God said, "let there be light," and there was light; he spoke, and it was instantaneously brought forth at his

command, and he who effected the great creating work of all things at the beginning, has said, "let there be light," and there is light throughout these latter ages, to discover to mankind their own state and condition ; how it is in the sight of Eternal Purity, who looks, not as man looks, but beholds the hearts of the children of men, with respect to his sacred attributes of knowledge and virtue, as he did at the first. " Shall I (says God) count them pure with the wicked balance, and with the bag of deceitful weights ; and while the veil is over all nations, while gross darkness covers their hearts, are they not pleasing themselves with using a deceitful balance, which, in the end, will be found wanting ?"

But, " let there be light," to the perfect discovery of their undone state and condition, in which they appear, in the sight of an awful and righteous Judge, who will " render to every man according to his deeds." Oh, may the light of the morning of the day of the Lord dawn upon your souls, and arise higher and higher ! may it shine brighter and brighter, till it is finally swallowed up in the boundless ocean of everlasting day, where there is no darkness, no night, no sun nor moon, but where is the everlasting habitation of the Lord God and the Lamb, who are the perpetual light of the whole community.

Have not we known a portion of this sacred heavenly light in our own hearts ? Yes verily ; I dare appeal to the experience of all who have, in any

degree, been brought to see the bitterness of their own states, when conscience hath secretly visited them ; how often hath it reproved you, how often hath it awfully sounded in the ears of thy first nature, “ Adam, where art thou ? ” It was at the first interview between our Lord and Adam, when he called to him, after the defection and departure from that wisdom that covenanted and formed man and all things. The all-wise Creator did not want to know where his creature Adam was, no, but that his deeds might be made manifest to him by the light, in order to awake him from insensibility. O, son of Adam, where art thou ? what is thy state ? what is thy circumstance ? what is the end of thy being ? how is that great and important end kept in view ? Thus the question has been proposed to the sons of Adam in this day. Is not the state in which Adam was, thy own state ? Oh, son of Adam, “ where art thou ? ”

“ I heard (says Adam) thy voice in the garden, and I hid myself.” Oh, lamentable change ! Oh ! the distance between the creature and the Creator ! by whom he was formed in innocence, brought up amongst the constellations of heaven, endued with a capacity for the everlasting contemplation of infinite perfections ; placed in Paradise, and blessed with immortality : but why this distance ? why this fleeing from God ? why the sacred intercourse interrupted, and the eternal joy gone ? His nakedness was the cause ; shame, arising from the guilt of conscience, for the breach of the

divine law, drives him from the face of the Divine Presence. Oh, son of Adam, where art thou? "I hid myself," (said he, guilt had taken hold) "I hid myself." It is the same with all the children of Adam, when the womb of the morning opens upon them, and presents to them their own states, and puts the awful query,—O son of Adam, where art thou? They are ashamed to own the glorious voice, and, from consciousness of guilt, with shame, appear before their Almighty Father and Friend: "I hid myself;" it was a term never heard of in the innocency of creation. But man, fallen into sin, a defection and departure from the Lord God ensued, and instead of living in the presence of the Eternal Creator, he was ashamed, and hid himself.—O, son of Adam, where art thou? And thus the rest of mankind, the progeny of Adam, are the same in the state of nature, from one generation to another. They would hide themselves from the face of that God with whom we have to do, the clear discoveries of the heavenly light is unwelcome to them, because it brings a degree of horror, letting them see misery on the one hand, and happiness on the other. But its glorious descent and operation affords wisdom from day to day, unto those whom that God would form to himself, who always knows what is in man, and what there is to be formed in him to his own image. But ye stumble at the light, that sacred operation of the divine and heavenly light, the righteousness and wisdom of God and Christ, which is the true light; and are not convinced of your own unrighteousness and folly.

This was the unhappy state of Ahab, king of Israel, when he was surrounded with multitudes of prophets, who with flattering suggestions, spoke smooth things to him. They told him he might go and prosper. He approved of their counsel, and their tidings were pleasing: but what they prophesied to him were lies; those wicked ones that he consulted were very many: but was there no other prophet in Israel? Yes, there was one prophet of the Lord's, that declared truth, to whom God the Father had given the Spirit of prophesy; he was capable of being an instrument, in the hand of the Lord, to give to others sound counsel, and not to flatter, as Ahab's four hundred prophets did. This man of God, when he came, declared that the controversy of the Most High was against him: this was displeasing to Ahab, and when Jehoshaphat inquired after a prophet of the Lord's, he replied, "there is yet one, but I hate him; for, he doth not prophesy good things concerning me."

But such are the good things which the language of wisdom hath spoken against the unwearied whisperings of the enemy of mankind; and, when the affections are vitiated, and the heavenly relish lost, the understanding, will and judgment, are often assaulted and baffled, by the prince and power of darkness; and although there are multitudes of enemies combining against us, yet the eternal, unchangeable, and everlasting Wisdom, condescends to teach us the solemn truths of his kingdom; and his voice has been like those awful

awakening claps of thunder in our ears, which formerly shook the top of trembling Sinai. The deceitful counsel, from the false prophets' mouths, was believed and obeyed, while the prophet of the Lord, though telling truth, was rejected and abhorred. "I hate him," said Ahab; but notwithstanding this declension, he delivers his message from God, however contradictory to the inclination of Ahab. But mark the consequence; he ordered them to commit him to prison, and to feed him with the bread of affliction and the water of affliction, till he should return in peace. Oh, remember the answer, with trembling, all ye wanton aspirers, who are despising the counsel of God! Remember, the Lord Almighty and his commandments, and those by whom he sends, from the first morning of creation unto the dawning of the day of eternity: "If thou return at all in peace," (says the prophet) thou that tramplest on the word of God, "the Lord hath not spoken by me." And it is most unquestionably true, and justly applicable to those who depart from the word of the Lord; they can never return to the truth and inherit peace, unless they feel and know the divine operation of the Spirit of Truth in their hearts. For, in how transient a light doth profession appear in the natural man, when no other way has been cast up for him; and a profession, adapted to the most perfect system of religion, will do nothing for us in a day that is hastily approaching, without the power of life and godliness is inherent in the soul. Open iniquity has slain its thousands, but this formality hath slain its tens of thousands.

I fear there are more who go down to the dust clothed with the profession of religion only, than those who possess the life and substance of it; of those who have only the law in their mouths, than of those who have it written in their hearts. And whatever advantages mankind transgress against, whether greater or less, so will their proportion of reward be. God hath let some see their own fatal condition, who would have a good work wrought in them, through their own activity and wisdom. —I will be religious. I will hear. I will read. I will collect some systems of religion into my head. I have been unacquainted with myself; but I behold my undone state and condition, and now I will be more religious. Thus all things may appear well for a season; there may seem to be a change wrought in us, an abhorrence to that which is evil, and a love to that which is good; there may be a desire to enter the inward courts of the temple, to assume the name and character of true christians, and be active in religious duties; but unless these resolutions be aided by divine grace, it will not be a lasting change, it will be soon over, and like untimely fruit, never arrive at maturity and perfection. For the paths that lead to blessedness are still the same, and the only true christian religion is according to the inward covenant of grace, which stands not in words, but in power, and in much assurance of the power of the Holy Ghost. By this you are guided and directed in your way, and by its sanctifying virtue, are made like Christ. Without this, you are only in the exterior courts of the

temple, in the outward profession of religion only, and in a name to live, when alas ! you have been dead ; the old nature of the old man still remains, and “ the voice is the voice of Jacob, though the hands are the hands of Esau.”

Great is this mystery, and unfathomable to the natural mind ; it cannot be comprehended but by those who have the light which shines from above, the light of eternal wisdom. None but those who have this great work begun in them can lay claim to the glorious character of being “ children of God,” and heirs of the kingdom of light and immortality. It is possible for people to make a laudable profession of religion, and not to have come to the saving knowledge of the truth ; for, the noblest confession with the lips, without a renewed and sanctified heart, is absolutely offensive to that God with whom we have to do, who “ weigheth the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance.” But when the holy light shines forth in the understanding, and shews them, that their own strength is weakness, folly and insufficiency ; and they see sin and iniquity exceeding destructive, then they not only see, but desire, “ to flee from the wrath to come,” to be preserved and kept from the powerful attacks of the prince of darkness, who has seized multitudes of mankind in the uncleanness of conversation. He that first seized, with the temptation, in Eden, has again assaulted, with the same violence as heretofore, and the mistaken souls, who by their own workings, think they have made a transition from that

wretched state, may perhaps be got farther in the land of infatuation, in sin and uncleanness with the false prophet.---“ And I beheld three unclean spirits like frogs that came out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the false prophets ; these three unclean spirits are the spirits of the devil, and unto them were seemingly committed the power of working miracles, in imitation of the miraculous power of the Son of God.” But were their profession of power and wisdom weighed in the balance of the sanctuary, and viewed by the light of the gospel, it would be found no more than presumption. And unless they can approve themselves, by those marks which are laid down in the gospel, it is no better for them than if they had lived in open uncleanness. For those he hath sent forth to boast in their own righteousness, to sacrifice to their own nets, and to burn incense to their own drags, saying, “ my own right-hand hath saved me.” To value themselves on the achievements of their own strength and wisdom, when it is no more than this base restless spirit that comes out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. And what is it for? It is to gather the people together against the great day of the battle of the Lord ; to bring the poor deluded multitudes of mankind to trust in a broken reed, and in a staff that will pierce through their hands ; to gather together the nations of them that forgot God, against the great and awful day of the Lord Almighty, when paleness of face, and feebleness

of hands, shall come upon them, when the highest cedars, and the most exalted and haughty children of men, will be as stubble, cast before a terrible and devouring fire, when he appears, in tempestuous rage, to shake terribly the earth.

O, have a care of being found in a course of unrighteousness, and in seeking to place your happiness and dependence in a false and groundless imagination of men's devices ; but remember that your all, your everlasting all, is at stake. Remember with trembling, that if, after you have escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, you be again entangled ; the latter end will be worse than the beginning, and lamentable will be your portion in time and in eternity.

It therefore requires the utmost application of every soul "to add unto their faith virtue, and unto virtue knowledge, and unto knowledge temperance, and unto temperance patience, and unto patience godliness, and unto godliness brotherly kindness, and unto brotherly kindness charity." I would have no soul to apprehend that I lessen, or would lessen, purity and holiness of life upon the face of the earth ; but that purity and holiness of the heart, might be renewed, and changed into the glorious and heavenly image, by the Spirit of God. The law of the ten commandments must be absolute necessity, obligatory to men, in their spiritual state ; and, to us, it is an holy and abundant precept, though in some, it is lost. There

is an immediate allusion to all this shewed forth by us, as were by the children of Israel, who made to themselves idols, and inscribed upon them the name of God, though it were and is expressly declared, “thou shalt not make unto thyself any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, to worship it.” But we are assured, that amongst the christian names there are some that are making to themselves the likeness of something in heaven; and this is not known but as we come to attend to the heavenly Teacher and Spirit of God; for, some return again to their folly, and wallow in their filth and pollution; but unless they are renewed and born anew they cannot inherit heaven, and all the glorious treasures of an everlasting kingdom.

There are some who are contriving and engraving idols; that are making to themselves an image, or likeness to something; as faith, hope, and charity, the great and glorious characters engraved on the true christians; and glorious riches they are, peculiar treasures, and inestimable pearls, which never fail. Now such as these, some have only made images of; they have a notion that they call faith, which is only opinion instead of hope; they have something they call hope, but it is no more than expectation; and, instead of charity, that is of eternal duration, that love which abides for ever; instead of this excellent grace, they have erected an idol which is nothing but self-love. These dead images have taken place; they are, and have been, too much resting in them

in all parts of the christian world, and many have made to themselves these images and likenesses to worship them, have been bowing down to them of all professions, of all names and distinctions in the world ; and all nations will (unto the final consummation of terrestrial things) continue in this fatal mistaken notion till Christ enters into their hearts ; and then Christ the King of glory will give them light, and as the morning star of eternal day, he will become precious, ever rising and shining with celestial brightness, till the day be dawned, and “ the day-star arise in their hearts,” to be their light and their lamp for ever.

But, alas ! opinion with some has passed for faith ; they hear the doctrine and success of the gospel of the holy Jesus, and assent thereto ; they believe in notion, and confess with their lips all the truths of the gospel, all its glorious perfections, yet all this may be mere tradition, by which the heart is not bettered by the things which are declared ; but if to the great truths of the gospel of the holy Jesus, they can yield the assent of their judgment ; if, by true faith, they receive them, and make them, through divine assistance, their own, not merely flattering themselves with the glorious prospect of immortality, but are embracing them, by the sanctifying spirit that leads to the Sacred One ; then it is by faith we lay hold on Jesus, and on these great things of eternal life. By faith a glorious conquest is won ; by faith we ascend through the various gradations of purity,

from victory to victory, and from strength to strength, till faith gives us the victory over this world and over sin, carrying on to the glorious completion of the Christian warfare, and fitting us for an everlasting union with the triumphant host who have overcome the world. This is the faith that works by love to the purifying of the heart; but instead of this faith, some are erecting an image only, and yet are arguing for the verity of it, and say it is real and substantial, when it is only an opinion; but such, whatever they say, whatever they think, they know not that their salvation must be wrought out by faith, being strengthened by the Spirit of God.

And thus thousands have been led into idolatry, and have created to themselves an image only, when their hearts have not known any thing of faith in Christ, going on from faith to faith, from strength to strength, and from grace to grace. Oh! it is lamentable to hear spread the mournful tidings of the prevalence of image worship, which has seduced many from their proper work and business, to enter themselves on that which will fatally deceive them in the end. How lamentably doth David represent idolatrous worship! "God forbid that I should offer to the Lord God, or spread among the people, a sacrifice of any vile thing," as some have done, when at the same time they have had no manner of experience, no inward knowledge, but the heart hath given the tongue the lie. I fear this is the case with many in this professing age, and I am convinced that whatever

name they bear, if it is not received from heaven, it is no more than opinion that hath passed with them for the faith, and the names they bear are like a name unknown. It is certain that there are such that have pleased themselves with a profession of truth, yet have not witnessed it in their experience. I think they cannot be justly compared to the Samaritans, whom the woman called to see a man that told her all that ever she had done; they believed, and their opinion was founded on the report: there seemed to be a pretty honest conviction, yet they were not contented therewith, for the foundation of their faith, till they came and conversed with him themselves; then said they to the woman, "Now we believe, not because of thy report, for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ the Saviour of the world."

Now, my friends, you that profess christianity, what is the ground of your faith? Is it the report of them that have known whereof they spake? Is it the mere report and testimony of former generations; or have you heard the voice of Christ, and does he live in you the hope of glory? The holy scriptures are an excellent corroborating stream, wherein I can view Christ, and the compellations of his love, which is of the same efficacy as in former ages. It is not because I have heard tell thereof; but I have felt it, I have drawn nigh to him in the humbling experience of its enlivening motives; and worship him, not only as the desire of former ages, but as the present glory of his

people. I can believe in him as my God, my hope, my help, my heavenly Father and Friend, and the constant Companion of my ways through the wilderness of this world.

Here is the ground of faith, the living, saving faith, in which the righteous are established, built up, and comfortably edified for the everlasting kingdom ; in the living knowledge of what He is now to them, and in the divine assurance of what He will be, when all ages and generations shall be swallowed up in the eternal day ; when they will, by advancing from one progression to another, lay hold on eternal glory, and can say, in the solemn language of the apostles, “ We are not come to the mount that might be touched and that burned with fire and brimstone, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, nor unto the sound of the trumpet, and the voice of words, which voice was so terrible, that those who heard, entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more ; so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly quake and fear : but we are come,” by the exercise of divine faith, “ unto Mount Sion,” unto the holy city of the living God, and to the boundless fruition of unspeakable joy ; we are come “ to the new Jerusalem, to the general assembly, and church of the First Born, and to the spirits of just men made perfect,” and all the united confluence of the angelic host. O, blessed are they who are fitted for that excellent and glorious habitation, where the sons of Wisdom have eternal abode.

This appears to have been the joyful experience of the primitive christian believers. Their faith laid hold on, and, by their experience, they knew that they were come to Mount Sion. They had that treasure in earthen vessels, the excellency whereof was not of man, but God ; and as the native descendants of that illustrious and royal race, they knew, from a degree of divine assurance, that they abode in Him, and when their earthly tabernacle was dissolved, and the immortal inhabitant dislodged from its fabrick of clay, that a building of God was prepared for them, “ an house not made with hands, but eternal in the heavens ;” and towards this excellent and glorious abode they pressed forward.

Now, mere opinion cannot lay claim to these great and excellent promises ; I will tell you how far it will reach ; it reaches often too far, and exhibits a mistaken prospect to the deluded minds ; they are desirous after happiness, but their desires are founded on self-love. “ Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my latter end be like unto his ;” let my habitation be in the land of eternal quietude. If this is only the language of self-love, they who speak it, ever delight in that which is evil, and flee that which is painful to nature, and shun the cross of Christ. They can desire after heaven ; let my habitation be in the land of eternal quietude ; but let them remember that flesh and blood can never enter the kingdom of God. Thus they have been brought to farther mistakes respecting their condition ; they

have mistaken their desires to be heavenly ; but whilst their desires were after heaven, they have been possessing the corruptions of their nature, and have been established in no manner of meetness for the inheritance of his saints in the light, for the glorious fellowship of the blessed above. They think they are well on their way to the kingdom of God ; but oh, that they may open their eyes before they are closed to the world, and their immortal spirits entered into the confines of a boundless eternity ! Oh, that they may see that their minds are unsanctified, and that their hearts must be created anew in righteousness and true holiness, before they can be clothed with the garment and brightness of the Lamb ! They desire it may be well with them ; opinion can lead to this ; but it is faith that can purify the heart ; this faith is effectual, it works by love, it has a happy operation on their lives, it kindles heavenly desires, opens a fountain of purity and sanctification to the soul, from which fountain arises and flows forth every excellent stream. Oh, that ye might be brought into this holy heavenly frame of spirit ! Here you can have living desires after heaven and happiness, not merely an exemption from trouble, sorrow, pain, uneasiness, and vexation ; but a place of happiness, a land of consummate purity, of peaceful and celestial rest.

Can opinion avail itself by desires and expectations ? No : has not expectation passed for hope, as well as opinion for faith ? Yes ; all flatter themselves with a hope in Christ in an awful ap-

proaching moment ; but let me say, it is a truth that is eternal in its duration, and will abide forever, that no expectation that is built upon mere opinion, will ever bring us to everlasting glory. There may be an expectation, that is, a passion of the mind, that arises after some object to which it has no immediate relation or fitness, but is in degree intercepted, and thus they deceive themselves ; for the mind being unrenewed, there is not a possibility of the true hope being admitted, and that which they call hope, is but a mere empty expectation, that will fatally deceive them ; at the last day we must be made sensible of the worth of, and be made meet and fit for, the object of hope set before us, before ever we can receive that “ hope which is an anchor to the soul, and keeps it sure and stedfast,” amidst the tempestuous commotions of an uncertain world. This keeps the soul in heavenly relation to the Father of Spirits, and gives it an admittance into the holy mysteries that are within the veil. That glorious God, who created all things out of nothing, can, by that power which made us in his likeness, translate us from death and darkness into the kingdom of his marvellous light ; the glorious gates stand open night and day, yet there is nothing unclean, unsanctified, or impure ; “ nothing that worketh an abomination or maketh a lie,” shall ever enter.

Let us attend to the operation of hope, amongst the primitive believers, and try whether the passion of the mind, which we call hope, be attended

with the same happy effect as theirs : “ what manner of love is this, (said they) wherewith the heavenly Father hath loved us, that we should be called the sons of God?” They readily owned they knew not what they should be when clothed with immortality, or in what sphere of celestial glory they were to move. “ We know not what we shall be,” said they, with respect to the resurrection of the body ; “ but this we know, that when Christ appears, we shall be like Him as He is.” Whence proceeds this knowledge, but from the happy testimony of a holy conformity to his life. This was the happy effect of this excellent hope, and “ he that hath this hope in Christ, purifieth himself even as He is pure.” He that hath this hope in Christ, this glorious hope, has the immortal riches, the enduring treasure, that was hid from former generations, even “ Christ in them the” sole “ hope of eternal glory.” He that hath this hope keepeth himself pure, for he knows the habitation of peace and purity, is the habitation of them that are sanctified.

This is the nature and constitution of hope, it is led by an eye of faith : faith looks on, and assents to ; and hope, with the hand, lays hold and fastens on the prize. He that hath this hope in Christ, purifieth himself even as he is pure, according to his degrees of strength and knowledge ; for he knows that holiness is inscribed on every sanctified vessel in the Lord’s house, and that nothing which is unholy can ever enter there. For the Lord shall be unto them an everlasting light, and their God

their glory. And charity, that love of God, which remains when faith and hope will be swallowed up in the heavenly vision, and complete fruitions of the divinely excellent and glorious object; this charity, that is divinely pure, has been counterfeited with an image of self-love, which has been made amongst the children of men, and set up in opinions. "I am of Paul, I am of Apollos," I am of this or the other party, of this or the other name and distinction: thus hath this image been erected and worshipped, instead of the divine charity that abides for ever, that keeps the heart pure and clean, and establishes it upon a glorious and unchangeable object. They have been centering themselves in their own narrow conceptions, seeking their own things, and not the things of Christ; thus, neglecting the great things of their eternal happiness, they have found themselves empty, void, and without form. These drink and yet are thirsty, they eat and are not satisfied, and are heaping up their treasure in unsound bags that will not hold it. They are making a profession of religion, without the life and substance of it; they dream of much, but lo it will come to little; and, with respect to the great things of salvation, will be unprofitable, and their worship is an untimely fruit in the sight of the great and adorable Majesty on high.

May the law of the Lord enter into your hearts, to convince you of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment to come, that you may see your state, while the day of blessed visitation remains; see

the various circumstances of your condition, and in what manner of meetness you are for the blessed inheritance of life eternal. May that glorious light which shines from heaven to the ends of the earth, and reaches to the most hidden state and circumstances of men, that light that never flatters nor ever will; that sacred manifestation of the Spirit of Truth that leads into all truth; that Spirit that is given through Jesus Christ to the world; may that blessed eternal Spirit of Grace and Truth shine forth in us, and discover to us, how matters stand betwixt God and our souls; for it is clearly evident to the view of my understanding, that all our opinions, all our hopes, will avail us nothing, till they are fixed and established in the faith and hope that comes by Jesus Christ. We can have no lasting peace till we submit to the rules of the everlasting gospel, and are, through its virtue, brought into a holy conformity to the heavenly Teacher. But this men cannot do of themselves; for the light, that glorious and celestial light, is come into the world, yet men by nature, love darkness better than light. But, methinks, the proper effects of the light in the first fruits of creation, engages the first fruits of our capacities, to live and walk by it, with an enlivening understanding; but some abide so much by the light, that they cannot make any progress in the things of God.

All these great truths of eternal salvation can never enter into their souls, till they are brought to cry out with the apostle, "Oh wretched man that

I am, who shall deliver me from the wrath to come!" These can never take in the glorious existence of the object of worship, until God, by his holy Spirit, opens their hearts, and unfolds their dark understandings; then, as the mind is affected by the humbling, melting operation of immortal kindness, it is brought to a true sense of its state, and humbled as in the dust: "Oh wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the wrath to come!" Thus the mistaken multitudes of mankind, that say they shall sit as a queen, and know no sorrow, have an opinion instead of faith; flattering expectations, instead of hope; and instead of that divine charity that remains for ever, are setting themselves in the warmth of self-love, till at last they are brought to cry out, "O wretched man that I am!" Oh, that I had more knowledge of myself!—Look not upon me, O daughter of Jerusalem!—the sun hath looked upon me, upon the corruptions of my nature. I thought I had been comely, when I viewed myself, and was dignifying myself with the scanty garments of an outward profession: but look not upon me, O daughter of Jerusalem, for I am black! I now behold my deformity and disagreeableness to unspotted and infinite Purity. Oh, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the dreadful wrath to come!

This is the solemn language of all flesh, when they are favoured to see themselves in the light of their God; but there are some among you that have made to yourselves images of faith, hope, and

charity, and ye worship the erection on the plains of Babel, and are falling down to worship these dead images of religion. In the plains of Babel, and in the land of confusion, are the mistaken multitudes assembling together, to offer worship to the various images they have formed, and happy are those who know the veil to be rent, and the Holy Spirit to enlighten their understandings, and that these images are broken to dust by the breath and power of the eternal Spirit of God.

How often may we remark persons making use of the forms and words of another's prayer, and perhaps the experience of another, that is quite foreign to their own; or, in their addresses to God, have been forming and fashioning their worship in peculiar manners that are not their own; and thus they are offering to the Lord of Hosts, a sacrifice that hath not only cost them nothing, but is, at the same time, a "lie in their right hands." They can approach His holiness, and take His sacred and adorable Name in vain, without difficulty. These are such things as I cannot be reconciled to; and, how often may we hear people expressing themselves in language of scripture, accented to worship, in that which it has no manner of relation to? I have heard persons that are vile, say or sing, (as if they had a right to use the language of scripture) "rivers of tears run down my eyes because men keep not thy law." I have heard persons that are vile say, "I hate the workers of iniquity," when the glorious work of righteousness is not the desire of their hearts, but

only the experience of another. When they approach the dread Majesty, thus they mock Him, and thus discover the mark of mistaken worship, and the indubitable mark of the beast is in their foreheads. I have heard others say or sing, as the “hunted hart panteth after the water-brook, so panteth my soul after thee, O God!” when it is nothing more than what such impose upon God for worship; when, alas! there has been no manner of truth in it at the heart, nothing but an expression which they have vainly taken into their mouths.

Oh, the abominable presumption of men, that they should thus strive to deceive the all-seeing eye of the Dread of Nations, and appear before God with a lie in their right-hand! Oh, that man, whose breath is in his nostrils, should thus mock the Almighty Ruler of heaven and earth! They are creating an image in the plain of Babel, and are falling down to worship it; they are worshipping with their heads and their tongues, whilst their hearts are far from Him; they have spoken other men’s words, and have been led on to idolatry till they are become a dead substance. True worship would clothe mankind with reverence, it would raise an awful petition for deliverance and salvation, were they convinced in themselves, that the Lord beholds them, and that they are weighed in the balance of the sanctuary, and are found wanting; and when they have seen themselves as in the vision lost; then they cry out, “Oh, wretched man that I am!—Lord save me, I perish!—

send forth thy help, or I sink ! if I have not thy help, I am undone.”

If we are truly awakened, we shall find arguments to address the great Parent of mankind ; and it is necessary we should cry to Him for help and preservation. If a child wants bread, it will cry to its parent for relief ; and, in this similitude, I mean to spread greater things before you by smaller ones, and to direct your solemn cries to the Universal Parent and Friend. I pay a peculiar regard to such motives as may excite and awaken tender compassion in men towards themselves : their consciences should be their own monitor ; that which would move them to call for relief—they that walk in the light are the sons of light and of day—they have a language that enters the ears of the Lord of Sabbath,—in their feeble cries they look towards the glorious habitations of his holiness, with awful reverence ; and the spreading of their cause before Christ, is in the emphatical language of the heart, and in a flow of tears do they pour forth their prayers at the throne of Sacred Wisdom ; and there is no true prayer so acceptable to Christ as that which proceeds from the humble and awakened heart ; if it is but a sigh, an intelligible sigh, it is sufficient ; it is more divine and acceptable to the everlasting Father, than all the words and expressions in the world.

*The following Sermon was delivered, on First-day morning, the 17th day of the Fifth month, 1767, at the opening of the yearly-meeting, at the Fryers, in Bristol.*



*Art thou in health, my brother ?\**

IT hath been in my mind to adopt the language or salutation of Joab to Amasa ; but with sentiments different, far different, from those which actuated the treachery of Joab ; even those of true and tender affection, and with a mind replenished with that charity, which wisheth well to all.

*Art thou in health, my brother ?*

I could wish, with all possible solicitude, to lead every mind present, into the most careful inquiry, in respect to their spiritual state of health ; and to their immediate relation, and affinity, to that Supreme Almighty Being, who is the just and awful Judge of quick and dead. I fear it hath proceeded from too anxious a solicitude for the health of your bodies, and the prosperity of your temporal concerns, that too many of you have too frequently, and in a manner totally, neglected the great concern of your immortal souls ; which is indeed *the one thing needful.*

Those temporal concerns, I say, which are of a trifling perishing nature, have, I fear, interrupted and taken off from this principal concern: your anxiety and application to the attainment of the treasures and the enjoyment of the pleasures of the world, have occasioned too great a neglect of your religious duty.

The conveniencies of life are, by no means, a contemptible concern, where they are bounded by temperance, and confined within their proper channel: but as there is a part in us of infinitely greater, of no less than eternal moment; it also requires an attention proportionable to its proper worth; for what are temporal concerns, when compared with the important one of eternity!

The state of the body is subject to divers maladies; and when we have done our utmost to preserve it, we shall find in the end (and how soon that may be none knows) that it is of necessity, subject to the stroke of death, and to the enclosure of the grave.

I have therefore thought it by no means an improper inquiry for each individual to make, and deeply ponder, What is thy state, or how is it with thee, O my soul? who art capable of partaking of immortal joys! and designed to triumph over death and the grave. *When this earthly tabernacle shall be dissolved*, thy appointment and destination, if in proper soundness for it, will be to be made perfect with the whole family of God, and be no longer

subject to the diseases, pains, trials, and afflictions of this life, but share the things which are of God, *With the general assembly and church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven.\**

As this is of infinite importance to the sons of men, I have thought it my particular duty, upon the present occasion, to put you in mind of the necessary inquiry into the state of your spiritual health; the condition of your immortal souls: being very apprehensive that all of you, my brethren, are not in perfect health, who have outwardly the appearance of health; but that, on the contrary, many are in a dangerous state of disease and stupor; have only preserved a lethargic frame, and are tottering upon the brink of destruction.

This inquiry into the present state of experience, and of advancement in the work of salvation, hath branched itself out in my view, and divided into several classes, those who are now within the audience of my voice. And in the first place, I entreat the attention of you, the elders, amongst whom our Lord, as amongst so many shepherds, hath divided his flock; over whom you are appointed to watch, and to teach them to persevere in the path which leadeth to eternal life!

You have experienced the power of religion: you have *put on the armour of light*;† and ought to stand as guardian angels, and to call as the

\* Heb. xii. 23.

† Rom. xiii. 12.

angel called, saying, *Come up hither, and I will shew thee the Bride, the Lamb's wife.\**

*Are you in health, my brethren,—Are you in health, my sisters?—Are you in health, my fellow-labourers in the Lord?—Are you in a lively active state in the cause of religion, in the cause of virtue and temperance, in the power of the gospel, as it is in Christ?*

If those that have been called with an high and holy calling, as delegated shepherds under the one great Shepherd, walk uprightly in his fear and to his glory; then the sheep will be more likely to be gained upon to follow the great Shepherd; they will then have a frequent desire, a longing appetite after the divine manna, which cometh down from God out of heaven; for every life hath its food and its proper nutriment; and a soul panting after heaven can be satisfied with nothing short of the *food* from heaven.

In the next place, I address *you*, my brethren in the work of the ministry, reminding you of its divine institution, all that have entered rightly into it, *being called of God, as was Aaron.†*

It is written, *he maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire;‡* and though the term *angels*, be generally understood of the glorified spirits in heaven; yet, as it signifies *messengers*,

\* Rev. xxi. 9.

† Heb. v. 4.

‡ Psalm civ. 4.

it here seems to be applicable to those whom the Most High prepares and sends forth, to excite and enliven his militant church on earth.—*Are you in health, my brethren?*—It is the divine will that you be fed with celestial food; not with the unlawful things of the world, nor with the unlawful love of its lawful things; but that you become *as angels*, and *like his ministering spirits*, as a flame of fire. He will make you, if with due constancy ye adhere to, and attend on him, a sacred and fixed flame of love, and of light never to be extinguished: your care, and pains, and labour here will be but for a moment; your reward will be *a crown of life everlasting*. The bread that you eat, and the water that you drink, and of which ye minister a due share to others, will be daily springing up in you unto everlasting life! The divine manna, and the daily sacrifice will be continued. Rest in hope—Look for the coming of your Lord—Labour in the discharge of your duty.

Indeed it hath sometimes happened, that some of the ministers of Christ, *stewards of the mysteries of God*,\* have not been found faithful to what he requires. Be ever mindful of the necessity of putting on and wearing the spiritual robes, prefigured by those of *Aaron*: the holy girdle about the loins; the breast-plate, with the *Urim* and *Thummim*; the *Bell* and the *Pomegranate*. Some indeed have had the *Bell*, sending forth an empty unavailing sound, but have wanted the *Pomegra-*

\* 1 Cor. iv. 1, 2.

nate, the soul-enlivening fruit of the good Spirit of Christ, our everlasting High-Priest.

*But I hope better things of you, beloved in Christ, and things that accompany salvation.* I am sure we have need, with the utmost diligence, application and care, to keep the loins of our minds girded about: we had need to stand upon the watch: we have great need to maintain the utmost steadiness: for if we, who stand in the fore-front, should fall, we fall not alone: if we slide from the path of truth, who amongst us will be able to stand!

We ought to be endued with the spirit of wisdom, of judgment, and of a sound mind; which he hath promised to them that ask this blessing from him, and hath made good his promise.

*Are you in health, my brethren?* Are you strongly attached to the promotion and exaltation of that glorious cause which you have embarked in? Have each of you a share in, and a proper care of the Lord's work? Do you watch over the flock attending on your ministry, under the great Shepherd, and with the tenderness of gospel love, *seeking to save that which was lost?*

I freely confess my own fears, that I am not in a state of perfect health and sound mind; labouring as I ought in the work of the Lord. As it is a task of the utmost importance, I ought to remain ever diffident of my own care, and to watch daily.

in the discharge of a trust so great and important as that of the recovery and preservation *of the lost sheep of the house of Israel.*

The prostration of the soul before the God and Father of Mercies, in a cause of such infinite concern, is a continual duty, which can scarce ever be sufficiently discharged. The secret cry of my soul has, after this manner, frequently arisen, "Lord! spare thy people, and bless thine heritage." I am fully persuaded, my friends, were all the ministers and elders more blessed with sound health, the minds of the flock would be more filled with brotherly kindness, and more and more approach to that state which I have mentioned; they would know what is meant by the *angels being spirits*, and how to understand his *ministers being a flame of fire.*

I come now to another class, whom I mean to address under the title of those within the audience of my voice, who continue in a single state.

*Are you in health, my brethren and sisters?* Are you possessed of inward virtue, and of ability to live to God as becometh his saints; which alone will lead you to eternal life: do you aspire after this, with unabated zeal?

You must not expect always to rest satisfied with the good things of this life. The day may come when you will loath the abundance of your temporal possessions: you will then be concerned that

you have so indulgently dwelt in ceiled houses, and let the house of God lie waste.\* Then you would be glad to have exchanged the fading pleasures of life for the substantial joys of eternity.

Recollect yourselves in the spring-time of life ; consider early the importance of this exchange, while you have it in your power to make it. Look up to an object more glorious than the present world can afford you, even to the joys of that eternal inheritance which *the children of the first-born, the innumerable company of happy spirits, the general assembly of just men already made perfect*, are replenished with.—Pleasures unspeakable ! that exist for evermore !

*Art thou in health, my brother?*—My dear brethren, are ye fervently engaged in labouring for the promotion of the cause of God upon the earth ?

O, ye parents and heads of families, who are placed as delegated shepherds over them ; timely beware, lest the blood of your children, or any part of your charge fall on your heads : (if through your misconduct they become corrupted, and their souls perish.) Know that inquisition for blood will hasten from the Supreme Judge, who divideth the classes of mankind ; and hath, as it were, separated from the rest of those who are parents, and have children : his call is to these, “ Go work in my vineyard.”

The precious gifts which he hath given, as pledges of his love, are to be led and instructed by them with a proper authority.

If the parents experimentally felt the advantages of spiritual health in themselves, then would they be concerned that the tender minds of their children should be properly cultivated with the knowledge of the Lord, and a fearful apprehension of transgressing his supreme commands. They would teach them to look further than mere temporal acquisitions; even to God their Creator. They would bring them up in the nurture and fear of the Lord; in order that their minds might be filled from the store-house and magazine of boundless Good, and early enriched with the joys of God's salvation: and *this* would naturally diffuse the greatest satisfaction to the parents themselves, to see their children become the delight and ornament of human nature, and fitted for a glorious change! *the company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect.* The ties of nature, and the stronger ties of gratitude to Him who gave the blessing, call aloud for teaching the tender minds of your children, to walk in the safe and delightful paths of virtue. With what satisfaction and composure of mind will such parents be enabled to answer the great God, upon his awful examination to this purpose: "What have you done with those tender sheep which I committed to your care in the wilderness? have you trained them up in safety?" How will such parents be supported by a consciousness of having done their duty, in that solemn

hour!—They then may truly say, “I have done my utmost within my contracted sphere, within the narrow precincts of my allotment in life, to fill up my stated duty.” Then the Supreme Judge will set at his right hand such parents, and they shall be united to him in glory.

And I beseech you, parents, elders, ministers, (and I include myself) let us all say Amen, to this solemn care in our respective families; let us all discharge our several duties as men, hoping for the coming of our Lord; who will then say unto us, “Well done, good and faithful servants,” even in that hour when he shall come with terrors, to make inquisition for blood through the various ranks, whether ministers, elders, or heads of families, even throughout the various classes of mankind.

I wish all parents and heads of families would continually walk, hand in hand with their children and families, in the path which leadeth to life eternal; daily watching over, and improving their rising judgments, with the wisdom which cometh from above; instructing and encouraging them in the contemplation of divine things! persuading them to believe, as the truth is, that the things of this world are all uncertain, and fading away! that they have everlasting mansions erected for them in the city of their God; where (if they fall not short, or turn not aside) they will enjoy the company of saints and angels for ever more.

*Are you in health, my brethren and sisters ?*

Exercise yourselves in this your present state, differently from those, whose faculties are bounded within the narrow limits of this world ; cultivate, continually cultivate the minds of your offspring : endeavouring to raise in them a proper comprehension of the dignity of their natures, and to fix in them early a steadfast belief of their *immortality* ; which is of the utmost importance to all.

'The hearts of those are unsound, who live in a perpetual attachment to the pride of life ; who are, contaminated with the love of the world, wherein their chief happiness appears to be placed : how can such point out the way to the city of God ? how can they say to their children, " Let us retreat from the world, from this scene of corruption ; let us withdraw from the cares, the solitudes of life : let us ascend to our appointed home : let us contemplate the joys of eternity : let nothing separate us from that blessed hope ! "

How can parents thus address their children, when they have, perhaps for a long course of years, ceased to consider the awful importance of the subject ; and their own minds continue fixed, and tied down to the fading enjoyments of life ! Alas ! that the folly and vanity of the superfluous pleasures of the world should so entirely engage and engross the attention of any one immortal individual, as to take up almost every moment of their precious time !

Hence, sometimes, parents, instead of instructing the minds of their children, have so totally corrupted their own, that they have laid obstructions in the way to the immortal happiness of their offspring, and, when their children have for a time trod in the ways of religion and virtue, they have been so extremely corrupt themselves, as to oppose them in their passage ; to obstruct them, with violence, in their way to glory ; and have thereby aggravated their own guilt beyond expression ; alas ! what will their punishment prove, when convicted of so great a neglect and violation of their duty ? when he that is Judge of quick and dead shall appear in judgment, to render to every man according to his works ! May all parents, who are negligent in the discharge of their duties, lay it seriously to heart !

In the mean time, may you, my brethren and sisters in a spiritual relation, continue in a state of lively, active health—labouring in the sure ground of hope ; that, *when the great Shepherd himself shall appear, you may also appear with him in glory.* If you so persist, I cannot but yet hope, that your stedfast continuance will prove the means of spreading spiritual health, in an eminent degree. For, as on the one hand, minds infected and vitiated *with the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life,* are very apt to spread the contagion to all that are round about them : so, on the other hand, such as are restored by Christ, to a state of spiritual health, and by Him steadily preserved in it, often become instrumental in his

hand, to diffuse that blessing ; from whence healthy parents have been frequently observed to have healthy children.

I am convinced that the Lord is at work amongst the rising generation ; many of whom stand convicted in their own minds, of the want of spiritual health ; and are imploring the mercy of the God of their salvation.

In order to your attaining it, let me call upon you again, the present rising generation ; whose stations in life may be likely to have some little continuance ; be ever steadfast in the performance of your religious duties, that you may become heirs of the kingdom ; and have your portion with the children of God.

It seems to me of the greatest importance, in relation to the various affairs of life, to form aright the minds of youth ; and therefore, I once more entreat every parent present, that you watch over, and carefully nourish every seed of virtue springing up in the minds of your children, for the sake of their, and of your own, temporal welfare ; as well as for the hope and assurance of both their, and your own, eternal happiness.

*Are you in health, my brethren ?*

And here, let me class every single individual ; as every single individual is posting on his way to an eternal state of existence—and that they may

be guided by Infinite Wisdom, is my earnest desire; and be at last received into glory! welcomed thither by their dear Redeemer!

In this city he hath laid his hand upon one, and upon another. He hath preserved many from the pollutions that too frequently reign in the world; and hath mercifully induced some to look early into the law of liberty, into the counsel of his will, who thereby learn the things which belong to their peace.

*“Art thou in health, my brother?”* Art thou not only called from a state of darkness, into this marvellous light; but, obedient to the call, entered upon the road to eternal glory? Art thou in health, my fellow pilgrim?

A sense of the want of that food which Christ gives, is at least a symptom of life.

I believe it may be said concerning some among you, as was said formerly to Christ; *Lord, he whom thou lovest, is sick.* The decay of health in many, has been owing to foul feeding; to their daily feeding upon the spirit, maxims and manners of the world; upon exterior appearances, upon comparative righteousness, upon a comparison of their present, with their former state; whose minds are relaxed with the love and spirit of vanity. Some have relapsed into evil, and are now become too much unacquainted with God and his law; which, to holiness, and to that only, annexes

happiness. Many of these might have gone on from one degree of strength to another, had they not too much regarded the things of time, and fed too greedily upon the temptations and pleasures of this life; not enough considering, that the diseases and disorders of the mind thus fed, must certainly at last bring death, even the *death*, though not *dissolution*, of the soul. They might have been cloathed, if not with a perfect heart, yet with a certain degree of strength; and been more and more advanced on their way to the regions of bliss.

I beseech you, continue in your love to the gospel of Christ: that, day after day, you may feed on the holy sacrifice, and on that eternal fruit with which he nourishes the soul that hungers and thirsts after righteousness. And I cannot help, while I am speaking, pressing you in a more immediate manner, if possible, that, not relying on your own wisdom, and your own strength, but in a full dependance and leaning upon the breast of the beloved Jesus, you all, patiently, with a holy soundness, proceed in the high-way to the city of God; that you may be crowned at last with glory, honour, and immortality!

I find in me (at least) one qualification of a gospel minister: even that of a strong and ardent love, which wisheth well to all mankind: and in particular, that you who are present, may enjoy such a state of perfect health, as I have been at this time enforcing to your serious consideration:

may it spread through every class ; may you all increase in the stability of righteousness, through this life ; and may it carry you into the boundless joys of eternity, into that glorious city, not one of whose inhabitants, can say, "I am sick."

*The writer could not be present in the morning, nor at the immediate beginning of the following discourse: but was assured, by many present, that the Preacher had proceeded but a little way.*

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The subject taken from the Parable of the Unjust Steward, viz. this question :

HOW MUCH OWEST THOU UNTO MY LORD ?\*

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*19th day of the Fifth Month, in the afternoon.*

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HAVING in the morning enlarged on our debts or obligations to God, for the abundant variety of temporal blessings received from Him in trust, for the good of others, &c. he proceeded thus :

“ If we are beside ourselves, it is unto God : If we are sober, it is for your sakes.”† If, with the strength of love, and a zealous fervency of mind, we labour in and for the church, and for

\* Luke xvi. 5.

† 2 Cor. v. 13.

the good of those to whom we are sent ; if rising early and lying down late ; if being willing to spend and to be spent, disinterestedly, without any lucrative motive, or receiving any thing but mere food, from those amongst whom we labour ; if ministering to our own wants, and to the wants of others, carry any kind of evidence to the considerate and prudent mind, of a disinterested gospel ministry ; we have, so far, a valid claim to it.

“ We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord ; and ourselves your servants, for his sake.”\*

“ If we are beside ourselves, it is unto God : If we are sober, it is for your sakes. Having known the terrors of the Lord for sin ;” having experienced a gradual progression from the pit of pollution, from the mire and clay ; “ having (in some measure) tasted of the good word of life, and of the powers of the world to come,” we apprehend we have authority, more than any human laws or ordination of men can give us, to tell to others, what God hath done for our souls. I may proceed yet further with truth and sincerity, having the sanction of Him, who is the searcher of hearts ; “ for the love of Christ constraineth us.”† The foundation of the gospel ministry, is this constraining love of Christ.

We enter not into the ministerial office, with

\* 2 Cor. iv. 5.

† 2 Cor. v. 14.

any application of this sort, viz. "Put me (I pray thee) into one of the priest's offices, that I may eat a piece of bread."\* We think higher of the gospel ministry; so that no temporary emolument can possibly be an adequate inducement to us, to enter upon it; for "the love of Christ constraineth us." We speak with reverence and a feeling heart; and we believe the christian religion will never flourish, in its full perfection and excellency, till their being thus constrained, becomes the case of all that take the name of God in their mouths in a public manner. "The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead. And that he died for all, that they which live, should not henceforth live to themselves, but to him that died for them, and rose again."†

This expression seems to me, if properly considered, to cast no inconsiderable light upon the propriety of that query applied to us, viz. "How much owest thou unto my Lord?" which I cannot yet relinquish; though some may think I dwell upon it too long. "The love of Christ constraineth us; because, if one died for all, then were all dead." I look upon this as a fundamental part of the christian faith; "and that life and immortality" have been "brought to light by the gospel." We were all dead; we have all partaken of guilt; we have all been in a state of estrangement from the covenant of God; we have

\* 1 Sam. ii. 36.

† 2 Cor. v. 14.

all become, more or less, "aliens to the commonwealth of Israel."\*

In this state of death, the voice of God hath been signally extended unto mankind. I have sometimes considered with great attention, his declaration, "O death! I will be thy plagues;"† and it hath made a deep impression on my mind. This declaration of the most high God, hath been amply verified in the experience of all who have been quickened into a life of piety. "Christ" hath been "the resurrection and the life" to all such. Though "death" hath "come upon all," we are not all included under death; so as to be left without the quickening vivifying power that is offered to raise the dead to life.

"The dead have heard the voice of the Son of God!"‡ and have been raised again to life. I cannot think but it has been the experience of divers, within the audience of my voice, who know the certainty of this important truth, though others may reflect upon me, as being beside myself; yet, if so, I may say with the apostle, "it is unto God." But I would gladly speak intelligibly to the soul that is on its way to the regions of immortality; for, "if we are sober, it is for your sakes." I would ask, whether a secret something hath not often visited your souls, an unspeakable something, often secretly and immediately attended, that hath engaged you to send up

\* Eph. ii. 12.

† Hos. xiii. 14.

‡ John v. 25.

heavenly and earnest wishes, and raised in your minds strong aspirations, or breathings, after God? when we are told that “the whole creation groaneth together in bondage until now,”\* we have no doubt of its being relative and applicable to the present times, or such times of longing after God, to be delivered by him. “The Lord from heaven is the quickening Spirit.”† An expression of want, from a real sense of it, is an evidence of life; or being raised by him from a state of death. We have not been left in a dead state! this prediction hath been verified, “O death! I will be thy plagues.” He hath brought the first evidence of life, which is a sense of want. The spiritually dead have received it; and it hath been of his pure mercy, that he hath followed us from time to time, hath met us, as it were, in a narrow place, with instructions and reproofs, and secretly raised in us the hidden life of his own divine wisdom; he hath caused the animating and warming beams of the sun of righteousness to break forth. And, yet more, the word which called Lazarus out of the grave, hath already, in a good degree, raised some of us to life, even life eternal; “death is swallowed up in victory.”‡

And therefore, “the love of Christ constraineth us,” because he hath proved “the plagues of our death.” He not only died, but the immediate manifestation of his quickening Spirit hath led “captivity captive,” that we, by him, may triumph over the united powers of darkness.

\* Rom. viii. 21, 22.

† 1 Cor. xv. 45, 47.

‡ 1 Cor. xv. 54.

We follow not formally ; but we believe in, and are convinced, fully convinced, of the doctrines of the christian religion, the incarnation, glory, life, death, mighty miracles, and various circumstances relative to the holy life of Jesus, *as in the volume of the book it is written* ;\* and can, in an awful and reverend sense, commemorate those vast and most interesting events.

We admire, with humble hearts and minds, the awful transactions of that time, when sweat, like drops of blood, ran from the face of the holy Jesus ! when, being in agony, he prayed more earnestly ! when he was betrayed ! his sacred head crowned with thorns ! his face spit upon ! he was most ignominiously treated, and as *a sheep before her shearers is dumb*,† he complained not.

We behold him, in his agonies on Calvary Mount, offering himself as a sacrifice for the sins of the whole world ; that he might purify us, by the shedding of his precious blood ! *more precious than the blood of goats and lambs* ; or any other that was shed under the law. We believe in his amazing mercy, in offering himself there ; when, loaden with the immense weight of the sins of mankind, and the immediate sense of the Father's presence withdrawn, he was left to suffer alone ; under this extreme pressure crying out, *Eloi, Eloi, lama Sabacthani* ! was crucified ! dead ! and buried.

\* Isaiah liii. 7.

† Psalm xi. 7.

Here pause a little, I beseech you!—contemplate the adorable theme! acknowledge, O man! that unbounded gratitude which is ever due from thee: O, my soul! *how much owest thou unto thy Lord!*

I know we have been stigmatized, as disbelieving the truths of the christian religion. However, I call the divine record, the Saviour of the world, that was offered a sacrifice without the gate of Jerusalem, to witness for my belief, that he was sent from God, to do the *Father's will*; and I do, without controversy, believe that he was *God manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, believed on in the world, and received up into glory.\** We do not at all doubt that God was *in Christ reconciling the world unto himself†* That Christ gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time;‡ that with his stripes we are healed.§

By virtue of that holy Sacrifice, the remission of sins is gained; the awakening power of that sentence which is due to sin, is felt in a state of alienation from God; and as we believe, that if *one died for all, then were all dead*, so we believe that he who was crucified, dead and buried, likewise triumphed over the grave, and now *sitteth at the right-hand of God*, in a glorified body, to make intercession for man, in order that he might effectually purchase, and redeem to himself, a peo-

\* 1 Tim. iii. 16.

† 2 Cor. v. 19.

‡ 1 Tim. ii. 6.

§ Isaiah iii. 5.

ple to the praise of his Name ; and diffuse, throughout his universal empire, a similarity of opinion and nature, arising from the experience of his universal redeeming love.

I am no Arian—far from it :—I believe in the clear emphatic testimonies laid down in holy writ, that Christ was more than a prophet. I repeat my belief, that he suffered, died, ascended, and is now come “ *the second time, without sin, to salvation,\** in order to reconcile the world to himself. I know many are willing to admit that he died for all, as all were in a state of death : and that, by the imputation of his righteousness, all are justified in the sight of God. Whereas I think it more just to proceed in the language of the holy inspired apostle ; that *they which live, should not henceforth live to themselves ; but to him who died for them and rose again ;* that there may be an effectual redemption, a thorough change ; not the imputation of righteousness, without works ; but a real substantial righteousness in the heart and life ; which may operate upon, and regulate the mind and will, and lead us to a conformity to his divine nature : not a righteousness imputed to us from what Christ did and suffered without us ; but a righteousness raised by him within us, through our surrendering ourselves to his government, and yielding entire submission to his heart-cleansing, refining power.

\* Hebrews ix. 28.

However this doctrine may relish with some, I am convinced he died for all, that all should be saved; that, through him, we might be justified in the sight of God; that we might put on *the Lord Jesus Christ*, with all his divine affections.

“*The whole creation of God groaneth together,\* to be cloathed upon with a house from heaven;† not an imaginary house, and an imaginary righteousness; but to be cloathed upon with the grace of complete salvation; to put on the Lord Jesus Christ; having first put off the old man, with all his works, and with all his corrupt wisdom, or knowledge; which puffeth up, instead of that charity which edifieth.*”

“Christ is made unto us Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption.”

In remembering, therefore, that he died for us, let us consider what follows: *that henceforth we should not live to ourselves. I am crucified with Christ,‡* says one of the apostles, as a private person; and it should, and ought to be, the language in truth, of each individual, through all succeeding ages. *Nevertheless, I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.* He is become my righteousness; not by imputation only—but he actually liveth in me; and the life which I now live, is by faith in the Son of God. I think I may now say, *Let us press forward toward the mark for the*

\* Rom. viii. 22.

† 2 Cor. v. 22.

‡ Gal. ii. 20.

*prize of the high calling of God.\** Let us be crucified with Christ, *crucified to the world, and the world to us.*

O, my friends! for such I term you, in the course of that universal love which reacheth forth to the whole human race, which floweth from Him who hath thus wrought for me, and *brought life and immortality to light*, in my soul. Is any one of you desirous of being informed, *how much owest thou unto my Lord?*—lay hold on his offers of redemption, live in his fear, in fellowship with him, *in communion with the church of the first born, whose names are written in heaven*; so will you far better know, than any one on earth can inform you.

Examine the rising suggestions of your own minds; you are not formed to live merely to yourselves, merely within the contracted bounds of human privileges, in the narrow limits of morality. Consider the dignity of your nature; you are formed for the most glorious purposes.

I earnestly wish the rising youth would lay these things seriously to heart, and often meditate upon them, as one formerly did, who thus expresses himself: “While I was musing the fire burned. My heart was hot within me; then spake I with my tongue, Lord, make me to know my end, and the measure of my days, what it is, that I may

\* Phil. iii. 14.

know how frail I am.”\*—That they would contemplate the great design of Providence, with regard to their immortality, which would lessen their esteem of the unsubstantial joys of time, and engage them to pursue those which are *unspeakable and full of glory*, for ever. *While I was musing the fire burned.*

Continue this musing, this state of meditation ; prize the invitations of the Spirit of Christ, mercifully extended to your immortal spirits : and let your minds mount upwards : remember your pious predecessors, now perhaps in glory ; and their connexions in the world of Spirits : likewise put this question to yourselves upon every serious occasion, *How much owest thou unto my Lord ?*

I am fully convinced, were the christian world in general to leave out exterior ceremonies, and enter more into this inward meditation, their minds would be more largely replenished with divine fruits ; and those who are entering as it were upon the wilderness of this world, would then partake of the advantages. O, that we might all live in the beauty of holiness !

*My heart was hot within me : then spake I with my tongue.*—A necessary preparation for a preacher ! Abel’s offering, on account of such a preparation, was “ more acceptable to God than his brother’s.”

\* Psalm xxxix. 3, 4.

*Then spake I with my tongue.*—O, rising generation! what ye speak with your tongues, let it be from the same good source of hearts divinely prepared; since, on the other hand, for every *idle word* that men speak, they must *give an account in the day of judgment*. As you often speak with your tongues, fervently desire that the sacred faculties of the mind may be fitted for divine meditations, and the tongue to publish for the honour of God and benefit of others, what you have been taught by him; so will you never admit or utter any thing contrary to the divinity of Christ Jesus your Lord.

*Lord, let me know mine end!* O, that this sound may dwell upon your minds, who are the hope of the next generation! upon whom the weighty trust and care of the cause of God, must, in a little time necessarily devolve; that you may come to the knowledge of the *measure of your days*. I think, without violence to the text, you may learn from it, that you are destined for immortality: but the love of worldly things is too apt to engage the attention of that immortal part, the soul; which occasions, to many, the want of their knowing the great and glorious end for which they were formed, *a little lower than the angels*, and intended to be crowned *with glory and honour*.

“ Lord, let me know my end, and the measure of my days!”

I tremble, methinks, upon the brink of eternity! and so, with a little proper reflection, you might say all, the aged, the middle aged, and the youth,—“the end of all things is at hand:” flatter not yourselves, therefore, with length of days, and a long prosperity of worldly possession, suffer me to beseech you, for the sake of your immortal souls.

“What do I owe to my God?—What do I not owe him?”—He hath snatched me as a brand out of the fire: and I would not, though to gain the world, tread back again in the path of folly.

I know it by experience, and therefore I would persuade you, not to turn aside from the God of your salvation; but to acknowledge the infinite debt you owe him, and to pay him daily with obedience, adoration, and praise.

Our sins have been great, and our transgressions *never* could have been obliterated, had not Christ done it for us; let us therefore no longer dwell upon the rock of Presumption with Satan, who hath been a liar from the beginning; but let us rather descend into the valley of Humility and Peace, and settle accounts with the God of our lives, from whom I had strayed to that degree, that my life became a burden to me, and I have wished that I had never been born; but Christ, who was “a friend to the publicans and sinners,” is now become “the Rock of my salvation!” he hath caused me to trust in him, and to seek the

Lord my God. The debt I owe is infinite ; I desire ever to acknowledge it with all possible gratitude ; and to do my utmost towards the discharge of it, while I have my being.

If there is a soul within the audience of my voice, which (upon this awful query) *How much owest thou unto my Lord?* is ready to apprehend, that it owes too much ever to hope for a discharge, or freedom from the heavy load of debt it has contracted ; I have a little to say to such, even from my own experience : thy transgressions do not exceed the bounds of His mercy ; He still careth for thee, with an inexpressible fatherly care and tenderness. Even when His afflictions are upon thee, they are intended for thy good. *The bruised reed he will not break, the smoking flax he will not quench.* The more any of you see your real state, the more you remember the favours you have received, and feel the burden of your injustice and ingratitude, the more readily will he meet the penitent disposition of your minds.

I have no manner of doubt but He, *whose work is salvation*, who came into the world purely and purposely to save sinners, will carry on his own work ; and, as you wholly resign yourselves to his forming Hand, will purify your hearts, reconcile you to the Father, and make you everlasting instances and monuments of his infinite mercy. Lift up, therefore, thy head in hope, whoever thou art, in this humbled penitent state ; for *thy salvation draws nigh.* Thou owest abundance to thy Lord ;

and there is an abundance which thou canst never pay : but there is the good Samaritan, ever ready to do for thee, as for him, who going from Jerusalem to Jericho, *fell among robbers* ; by whom he was wounded ; and to say, *take care of him, and I will pay*. There is a glorious sound from the great and good *friend of publicans and sinners* ; he is ready to say to thee, who art in this penitent state before him, Take thy bill, and write down fifty." He will " blot out thy sins as a cloud, and thy transgressions as a thick cloud."\*

I cannot but remember with renewed feeling, and warm emotion of heart, the day that anxiety (in the view of my condition) seized me ; and how his mercy relieved me from it. He made my soul feel his compassion, and in the depths of gratitude thankfully to adore him. And hence I often feel a tenderness of mind towards those who are weary of vanity, and heavy laden with a sense of their manifold transgressions. I beseech such, by the mercy of God, that they would fly to him in their anguish of mind ; for it is He, and He alone, that can speak peace to the sinner ; though your unrighteousness may be great, it is not in any degree of proportion to his infinite mercy ! Again, such among you to whom I have spoke, who delight to dwell in the path of temptation, wherein you have too long continued ; I warn you to consider, that you are in the road to destruction !

I would not give up, like Esau, "my birth-right," to seek "a place of repentance with tears, and not find it."\* O, my soul! for ever acknowledge how much thou owest unto thy Lord! Let none say, "he hath blessed me variously, and in some future time I will awake my soul to gratitude. I have now something else to do," like him who, when an apostle "reasoned of righteousness, temperance and judgment to come," replied, "Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season I will call for thee."†

The like disposition continues to prevail in too many; and this seems to be the language of their hearts, "Go thy way this time; call upon me when I have lived to myself, and answered my own purposes a little longer: visit me at some distant time hence." Oh! rather *to-day, while it is called to-day*.—*Harden not thy heart*: do not defer thy repentance a moment; thou knowest not what "a moment may produce." Consider thy repeated transgressions; thy multiplied offences against God: heap not up *wrath against the day of wrath*: swell not the direful account. Thou hast hitherto trampled upon the goodness and the mercies of the God that made thee; venture not on presumption and delay. Time is uncertain: Immortality is at hand!

I beseech you, therefore, my friends, at the present time, that you will lay to heart the neces-

\* Heb. xii. 16, 17.

† Acts xxiv. 25.

sity of your making up this great account ; delay it not to the decline of life. Many are on the brink of the grave ! reflect upon your extreme danger ! think not of crowding the account of your repentance into your last hour of life ! you will find it extremely difficult to labour under the infirmities of the body upon a death-bed, without a reasonable ground of hope : all the offers of mercy having been long continued, and often repeated ; yet by you as long and as often rejected ; what then will discharge you from that dreadful account ! I wish it may never be the case of any within the audience of my voice. Let us all immediately ponder, rightly consider, and seriously improve this consideration : *How much owest thou unto my Lord ?*

*A Prayer after the foregoing Discourse.*

WITH unspeakable reverence we presume to approach thy presence, O Father ! who art in heaven : and with the voice of thanksgiving and holy praise, to offer the tribute, that is due to thee alone !

In a commemoration of thy mercy, thy infinite mercy ! we are awfully bowed before thee, as at thy sacred foot-stool ; in the deepest reverence and thankfulness, for the stretching forth *of the rod and the staff,\** which thou hast been pleased to bless, as the means of our furtherance in the way of life and salvation.

Though humbled in dust, in the sense of our unworthiness, we are, nevertheless, encouraged to breathe unto Thee ; to make mention of thy Name, with joy of heart : we adore that Goodness, which hath put it into our hearts to seek, serve and fear Thee ; and to turn to the place where *prayer is wont to be made.†*

Thou hast loved us before we loved Thee ; thy love, O Lord ! hath not been after the manner of men : Thou hast called us, when we were enemies ; and hast reconciled transgressors to thyself. Thou hast followed us in the day of our revolting ;

\* Psalm xxiii. 4.

† Acts xvi. 13.

and, when we were straying in the wilderness, as a most gracious and tender Shepherd. Thou didst lay thy hand on us, not only with judgment, but with mercy; and hast brought us home again unto thy flock, and thy fold, and forgiven us our multiplied transgressions.

Our deviations from thy holy path have not been punished with inexorable justice; but thy conduct toward us has been cloathed with unspeakable compassion. O, thou everlasting Shepherd, and Bishop of Souls! who has looked upon us when weltering as in our blood, and by thy divine power hast healed us! Thou, that art the Physician of our souls, hast cared for us, when "the priest and the levite" passed us by—when cast out and surrounded with the woes of unutterable distress; when thick clouds covered us—Thou, in thy abundant love "bowed the heavens and came down" to our help, "and all the darkness was put under thy feet!"\* Thou hast made the "clouds thy chariot," and walked "upon the wings of the wind," for our deliverance, when our iniquities like floods, rose high, and appeared unto us like to swallow us up in everlasting confusion! O! adorable condescension! We have no language to express thy mercy, and the boundless obligations we lie under to thy Majesty, who hast thus, in the times of unspeakable anxiety, vouchsafed to appear for us; and even when we have wandered from the counsel of thy

\* Psalm xviii. 9.

will, and trod in the path of the wicked, "thou sentest forth thy light and thy truth, and didst lead us back to thy holy hill!"\*

We acknowledge all these blessings to thy praise, O, Shepherd of Israel! who "sleepeth not by day, nor slumbereth by night."

To Thee we owe all our faculties, and all that is within us; and let them all, we pray thee, be consecrated to thy honour: we beseech that all our steps may be directed to thee; and more and more to thy service. For, Father of infinite kindness! it hath pleased Thee to rank us among thy children; to make "our dwelling with thy light; our habitation with the lifting up of the smiles of thy countenance;" and to remove every obstacle to a perfect communion with thee: the power is in thy hands; sanctify us thoroughly to this end; write the inscription of holy and heavenly characters upon our hearts; and oh! grant that we may still be preserved, through every trial and probation, to a peaceable admission into thy kingdom.

Blot out all our transgressions! forgive us freely, for thy dear Son's sake! remember us in the midst of thy mercy! deliver us, we pray Thee, as Thou hast graciously hitherto done, like a tender Father.

Grant we never may forget thy counsel; sooner

\* Psalm xliii. 3.

cut the thread of our lives, and number us to the silent grave!

May we follow Thee, with our whole hearts, submit to the patient resignation of our all, for thy dear service; and keep us to a happy conclusion in thy favour! it is all we ask, and beg at thy hand: with regard to outward circumstances, thy will be done! we have no other supplication to offer.

Preserve us, as in the hollow of thy hand; that from a militant state here, we may pass to a triumphant one, in thy everlasting kingdom!

O Lord! have mercy on thy people, and thy children, when they spread their hands towards thy holy habitation. Cloathe them with the spirit of grace and supplication; excite them to fly to Thee, their only Rock and Refuge: and to thy Name, that is an impregnable defence; where the righteous, in all ages, have ever found safety!

Regard those who are far off, and remain unacquainted with thy Name. We pray Thee, let the same mercy spread to them, which thou hast shewed unto us. Let the diffusions of thy spiritual blessings, in and through thy dear Son, flow among them, that they may seek Thee; that a holy anxiety of mind may take place, in order to a rest in the day of trouble; and that when the various trials and troubles of time are over, they having, through thy abundant goodness and sure sup-

port, " fought the good fight, and kept the faith," may be received by Thee, and be crowned with glory and immortality, in thy everlasting kingdom.

Oh, Thou that art fairer than the sons of men ! grace flows from thy lips ! Thou beholdest us when tempted, and speakest to our states with all the language of tenderness. Father of Mercy ! grant that innumerable multitudes may resort to thy temple, that sacred house, which thou hast erected to thy honour and service. May the poor, the sick, the maimed, the blind, and the naked, inspired by Thee with holy confidence, look towards Sion ; and be cloathed by Thee, with the wedding garment ; with the righteousness of their dear Saviour !

Thus, gracious God ! we are divinely encouraged to supplicate thy Name, on the behalf of the church militant, wherever scattered : that it may flourish in peace and stability ; that not only in part, but in the whole lustre of meridian brightness and splendour, they may commemorate thy glory !

In an humble sense of thy mercy and goodness to the workmanship of thy hands, we thank Thee, that Thou hast been pleased so abundantly to manifest thy loving kindness and favour, in and amongst us.

We prostrate ourselves before the throne of thy Majesty and Grace ! we would offer to Thee an  
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humble, grateful sacrifice of thanksgiving and praise, dominion, and every excellent attribute : for we know that we have nothing but from thy bounty, who art the Rock of our salvation !

To Thee, Father of infinite mercy ! for the multitude of thy mercies, in Jesus Christ our Lord ! To Thee, the author of every blessing ! with the Son of thy bosom ; our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Lamb Immaculate through the eternal Spirit, be all praise ascribed, now, henceforth, and for evermore. Amen.

*The following Discourse was delivered on the 22d day of the Fifth Month, 1767, at the Friars, in Bristol.*

I HAVE frequently thought, and the sentiment hath been confirmed from my own observation and experience, that a great and excellent point would be gained, highly conducive to the advantage of mankind, did they generally, though from no surer guide than tradition, subscribe with heart and mind to that certain truth recorded in holy writ :

*Verily there is a reward for the righteous: Verily he is a God, that judgeth in the earth.\**

As such a persuasion, from whatever grounds it arises, naturally tends to influence the conduct to avoid evil, and to pursue that which is good ; and with regard to many, it hath proved a step to their nearer acquaintance with God, who is the only sure guide to true happiness.

Indeed I scarce think there can be many, if there be any, who are hardy enough to deny the existence of a Supreme Being ; but believe on the contrary, that many, through the divine favour, enlightened to see their duty, and assisted to dis-

\* Psalm lviii. 11.

charge it ; do, in consequence of these favours, contemplate, with satisfaction inexpressible, these attributes of the most high God, here mentioned by the psalmist ; and could I be induced to think, that any part of mankind had swerved from their duty, for want of a firm conviction of those his attributes, as relative to his creatures ; and of the certainty that there is really *a God who judgeth the earth* ; I say, could I believe their minds were destitute of this animating and enlivening prospect of his power, omniscience, and goodness, in his superintending care, and present judging the earth, I should deem such but a very little removed, if any, from the state of the Athenians, upon whose altar the holy apostle discovered an inscription,

*“ To the unknown God.”\**

Indeed a language that was spoken formerly, hath been too much adopted by succeeding generations ; numbers of whom have been like those men of Jerusalem, who said, “ the Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil.”† Many (seduced by the grand deceiver and his agents) have endeavoured to estrange and withdraw themselves from the Arbiter of the whole earth : they have hence grown dark in their imaginations, and in like manner thus reasoned with themselves, “ He will do us no good, why therefore should we seek him ?—he will do us no harm ; why should we fear him ?” This we may justly look upon, as the

\* Acts xvii. 23.

Zeph. i. 12.

most unhappy seduction of mind ! as it misleads to the utmost distance, (without timely recovery) from that state of obedience, in which we are only capable of happiness, through the favourable notice of our Father who is in heaven.

But we may justly conclude, that such impiety, passed not the attention of an all-seeing God, inasmuch as he replied, “ I will punish those men of Jerusalem, who have said, ‘The Lord doeth us no good, why should we seek him ? he will not do us any harm, why should we fear him ?’ ”

The certainty of his superintendency, hath continued to be the happiness of all the wise and good in all ages ; and it is these, and only these, that discern wherein true happiness consists. Hence hath it become, and still remains, an established glorious truth, accompanied with, and confirmed by, the voice of all generations.

Under this head in particular, a petition or prayer that was put up to Him who hath created the earth, and assigned a reward to the righteous, by Agur, the son of Jaketh, hath appeared to my mind, as necessary at this day to be adopted by every individual who is desirous of living to the best, wisest and happiest purpose of life ; without which we had better never have lived : and I cannot but recommend it most particularly to *you*, the rising generation, whose minds, I trust, are at times susceptible of proper impressions ; who are not become slaves to the vanity and lusts of the world :

and indeed it seems like the language of one that is entering upon the stage of life : " Two things have I required of thee, deny me them not before I die ! Remove far from me vanity and lies ; give me neither poverty nor riches ; feed me with food convenient for me ; lest I be full and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord ? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain ! " \*

The substance of this memorable requisition hath appeared to my mind, during the course of a long series of observations of men and times ; with regard to its import in point of religion, virtue, the love and peace of God ; as including indeed all that is good and necessary for our safe conduct and support through this life, to that completion of happiness proposed as the final reward of the righteous.

But how will some be able to prefer a petition to a power in whom, alas ! they have no trust ? who would gladly be possessed of, and are much better pleased with, sharing a crown of wicked prosperity in this world, than with a prospect of a crown of pure and perfect felicity, in a state of endless futurity.

O, that parents would timely and vigilantly exert themselves to raise early impressions in the tender minds of their children, in order to fix deeply the christian doctrine, with all its glorious conse-

quences; firmly persuading and convincing them, that they are under the immediate notice of that Being, who is ever unspeakably good and gracious! and informing them that he is cloathed with every awful reverential attribute; as being perfectly wise, powerful and good, yet strictly just; that he is the Maker of us all; and that he delights to be called upon by us, with the tender and endearing appellation of, *Our Father, who art in heaven.*

Wherefore, under the deep and reverent sense of the certainty of his continual presence and providence, let us be ever careful, ever earnestly desirous to constitute a part of his children and family, in this our probationary state; that as we, by our rank in the creation, belong to the order of Spirits; we may assuredly hope to join the cherubim and seraphim, in the habitations of glory and peace, by our now becoming members of his militant church; and may, when our warfare shall be accomplished, unite with the chorus of his triumphant hosts, in the language and tribute of grateful adoration and praise.

And indeed without this blessed hope, we are of all creatures, the most miserable! being daily surrounded with lamentation and woe! combating with secret or obvious distresses; and encountering from the cradle to the grave, a perpetual succession and variety of afflictions. We might therefore truly say, if our hopes were only fixed upon the transitory and fleeting pleasures of this

life, we should be, of all the animal creation, the most miserable ! But we are assured that nothing less than God himself, is the infinite and endless reward of all that diligently and constantly solicit him to the following purport :—“ Two things have I required of thee, deny me them not before I die ; remove far from me vanity and lies ; give me neither poverty nor riches ; feed me with food convenient for me, lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, who is the Lord ? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain !”

Which is as if the Prophet had said, “ Thou art my Father, the Author of my being ; I made nothing myself, but am wholly and entirely the offspring of thy power, and workmanship of thy hands : thou knowest, therefore, what is best and fittest for me ; and what can I require else from the hands of thee, O my God ! than thy preservation out of the dangers of those opposite extremes in life ; thy guidance in the middle path of safety and innocence, and the enjoyment of thy approbation and favour in my walking therein !”

His mind was doubtless deeply impressed with the awfulness and essential subject of his petition ; and the “ removing far from him vanity and lies,” seems to constitute a very considerable part of it. But too many of us, deviating from this one most important point, are daily inclined to wander in the broad path of vanity and folly, and prone to mistake it for the path of peace ; till oftentimes the stroke of adversity, of pain of body, or afflic-

tion of mind, convinceth in part, and, if unreformed, that of death may fully convince us, when too late ! of this most fatal mistake.

The Prophet saw into the propriety of that frame of mind, which utters the language dictated by Divine Wisdom : *Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not to thine own understanding* :\* inasmuch as his gracious superintendency and merciful notice of his creatures is such as even *taketh in the ends of the earth* ;† and daily affordeth us the clearest manifestation of his goodness here, as it hath evidently pointed out to us that glorious path which leads to safety and eternal peace. But vanities and lies have too frequently estranged the mind, drawn it off from heavenly objects and heavenly cares, and fixed its attention upon things wholly unworthy the notice of an immortal spirit. Under the seducing influence of “ vanities and lies,” men have been frequently led to pursue many things agreeable to their own wishes and imagined interests, without the least regard paid to justice and equity.

I may possibly observe an explanation and distinction of the two states as I go on, which Agur seems to refer to, viz. The distress and misery of the poor, on the one hand ; and the vanity and pride of heart, too frequently conspicuous in the rich, on the other.

\* Prov. iii. 4.

† Isaiah xiv. 22.

Were the lives of men designed to be wholly alienated from a state of justice and virtue, and entirely instructed and fixed in the maxims and manners of this world, singly to be taught to consider it as the chief end of their existence, there would then be some excuse for using every species of art in joining "house to house, and laying field to field, till there be no place, that they may be seated as it were alone in the midst of the earth ;\* but now, as the great design of Him who judgeth the earth, and rewardeth the righteous, hath been abundantly manifested and denounced to such as thus counteract it, they who are intrusted with riches, will appear the more inexcusable for their unbounded avarice, and can have nothing to plead in favour of their violation of his plain and clear intentions respecting mankind. It will all at last be found "vanity and lies," without virtue; without a faithful dedication of their hearts to the revealed will of God. It is an observation of the preacher, that "God giveth to man that is good in his sight, wisdom and knowledge, and joy ; but to the sinner he giveth travail ; to gather and to heap up, that he may give to him that is good before God."† And though he, who is too unmindful of his Creator, may have erected edifices that appear to the eye of the spectator as if they would stand for ages, and may "call them by his own name;" yet, even in this view, without virtue, he is, in the sense of Agur, a liar to himself : he thinks he hath secured happiness, when the

\* Isaiah v. 8.

† Eccles. ii. 26.

frame of his mind is the reverse of it; fixed probably in a state of exclusion, from what may be justly deemed true and substantial happiness; or any acquisition, which will be acceptable and well-pleasing in the sight of God. In this circumstance therefore, he is a liar. The by-stander, indeed, who sees him in the free enjoyment of affluence, and taking his ease, in appearance, in the fulness of his heart, may be ready to conclude such an one happy, by being unacquainted with his secret griefs; whereas many of his moments, if their true state could be penetrated into, would appear like those distressed ones of the king of Israel; who, when he was seated in the height of his splendour, magnificence, and royalty, “rent his clothes; put on sack-cloth, fasted, and lay in sack-cloth, and went softly.”\*

Labour therefore after righteousness, rather than to “lay up for yourselves treasures upon earth; where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal;”† that by such timely and prudent application, ye may lay up for yourselves “treasures in heaven; where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal.”

Ye rising youth, whose minds are open to the dictates of “that wisdom which is from above,”‡ and to the just and tender sentiments which it inspires! Be your inquiries to the following purpose,

\* 1 Kings xxi. 27.

† Matt. vi. 19, 20.

‡ James iii. 17.

frequent as they are important, "What am I? Who made me? To what purpose was I created?" dedicate your moments to the real purposes of life; pay not too great a regard to any prospects or temptations of this world; fix not your attention upon its maxims and proposed interests, which, when they become our idols, do but deceive and deprive us of infinitely greater; beware of being seduced by the out-goings of your own minds; let not things that are transient and perishing, gain too great a possession of your hearts and affections; nor ever neglect the following interesting petition: "Remove far from me vanity and lies:" and remember that He is the guide, helper, and director of all them that put their trust in Him.

"Give me neither poverty nor riches." I readily conclude, that in the first part of this petition, all would willingly join; but riches are most apt to lay hold of our hearts and affections; many, indeed, are the promises to the poor, *whom the Lord will deliver when he crieth, even him that hath no helper*;\* they are frequently encouraged to hope; while the rich, if they misapply the riches committed to their trust, we are assured by divine authority, will be constrained to *weep and howl*: they enjoy the blessing and bounty of Heaven, which they ought to apply to the noblest purposes, particularly the relief of their distressed brethren; "inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren (saith our Saviour)

“ye have done it unto me.”\* For which purpose he hath communicated to some a larger share of temporal enjoyments; which ought to be a striking motive, a necessary incitement to well-doing: but, alas! instead of it, too frequently wealth becomes subservient to the purposes of pride, luxury, and wickedness: and therefore our Lord remarks in another place, *how hard it is for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven!*† And the apostle James says, “Go to now ye rich men, weep and howl, for your miseries that shall come upon you; your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth eaten; your gold and silver is cankered, and the rust of them shall be a witness against you; the hire of the labourers which have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth; the cries of them which have reaped, have entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.”‡

If the extent of thy stewardship, O man! is increased, thy obligations to thy Master are still greater: if thou hast received additional blessings from the God of bounty, it is a trust which call-eth upon thee to distribute with an unsparing hand. O then, ye who are thus favoured, maintain a steady endeavour to discharge your duty in the sight of your Creator; deceive not yourselves with a belief, that happiness consisteth in the multitude of your possessions, since they bring with them their dangers, as well as obligations to duty; but

\* Matt. xxv. 40.

† Matt. xix. 23, 24.

‡ James v. 1, 2, 3.

like fountains of water which supply the little streams, "be ready to distribute, willing to communicate;"\* this being the way to lay up in store for yourselves a "good foundation against the time to come; that ye may lay hold on eternal life."

I have known some men, and even women, who have thought the ground scarce worthy to receive the pressure of their feet, divested of all the ties and tenderness of humanity, and wholly puffed up with "vanity and lies;" but as the reign of such is short, and not even then without its pains, and *their end miserable*, as in many parts of the sacred records we are assured; may there be none such here present; on the contrary, let it be a part of your constant care, not only to feel the distresses of others, but to visit, and be convinced, and in a manner share the necessities of the poor and needy; to soften the anguish of their afflicted minds, to alleviate their hidden griefs, and to dry up the eyes of those that weep; and the tears which stream, "as faithful stewards of the manifold grace of God; having fervent charity: knowing that charity shall cover a multitude of sins. Using hospitality one towards another, without grudging; in proportion as ye have received the gift,"† removing far from you *vanity and lies*; and contenting yourselves with being fed with *food that is convenient for you*.

\* 1 Tim. vi. 18, 19.

† 1 Pet. iv. 8, 9, 10.

Some that are present, may think this unreasonable doctrine, and be ready to reply, "I have a family to provide for, and therefore I must embrace every opportunity of acquiring, and laying up all my acquisitions in store for them: and should I neglect the present, the like may never happen again in the course of my life."

Such, or the like arguments are often too readily taken up, and obstinately urged, in opposition to the most important concern; to the unspeakable prejudice of themselves, of the dispositions and morals of their children in particular, and of human society in general: how quick is the transition of many from a state of health to the grave! "Thou fool! this night shall thy soul be required of thee!"\* was formerly pronounced to one of this kind by the great Judge of all men. Consider, then, it may be thy case; and art thou prepared against thy dying hour, to render Him such an account, as will then support thee, and justify thee in thy claim to the inheritance of his everlasting kingdom, by thy having faithfully sought it, and attended to the conditions thereof, preferably to all the dearest objects of this uncertain and momentary state of existence?

I am fully of opinion, many who run after the world with open mouth, and that mouth scarce ever closed, until death closes it; could they be induced to yield some of their precious moments

\* Luke xii. 20.

to timely and serious reflection ; would endeavour to withdraw themselves from transitory things, at least before their last moments of life ; and in some measure, prepare (after this manner) to meet their God.

They would now and then retire, for a short space at least, from the world, before they entirely left it ; frequently sit down, and seriously turn their view towards another world, another state of being, into which they can never hope to carry wealth, or honours ; toward that approaching dread tribunal of righteousness, where these will gain no favour.

When we take a survey of the world, and look back through the generations that are past, we see that the love of vanity, wealth, and grandeur, hath proved, from time to time, the ruin even of the fairest empires and monarchies, which have been ever erected on the face of the earth : one reformation after another, and one state after another have been destroyed, from the pride and dissipation inherent in the minds of governors and teachers.

How ought this consideration to humble the hearts, and redouble the vigilance of such as are placed in exalted stations !

I hope and trust our love as a people, hath not been confined peculiarly to ourselves ; but extended, as it ought to be, to all our fellow crea-

tures ; to relieve poverty and distress, according to our abilities ; to prevent and reclaim from the infinite dangers and harms of impiety, and to encourage every kind of real virtue.

Though some families may have turned aside into the state of the world, and become engrossed with the love of its pleasures and enjoyments ; yet many others, I hope, and believe, have denied themselves ; have *laid hold of the good word of life* ; and under its influence, pursued *the one thing needful*. Though some have declined, and even refused, the subjection due to their Maker, as if they had asked with insolence, *Who is this Lord, that he should reign over our hearts?* and had added, *We know no power equal to that of getting wealth, and honours ;*—yet, others have not departed from the obligations of fear and love ; but have made proper reflections, paid just respect to the great Author of their being ; and manifested it by a steady watchfulness in conduct, which I most earnestly desire may become the happy case of every one of my fellow creatures.

The present solemn occasion is an important lesson of instruction to us all ! The departure of the disembodied soul ; from this world, to another ; which methinks should entirely prevent our setting too great a value upon all temporal possessions.

I have sometimes been present in a dying hour !  
I have been present at a scene of humbling dis-

tress ; I have seen in some, the closing period of a regular life of virtue : yet such a life, as on account of outward poverty, had been despised and over-looked—a whole life spent, in which its happiest moments would have passed for miserable, in the minds of thousands : yet when they have finished their course, they have experienced triumphant joy, in the blessed hope and assurance of eternal life, through the merits of their dear Redeemer !

I have also beheld, on the other hand, the habitations of splendour exhibit a mournful scene of distress, far different from the former ! then, when the solemn approach of death hath begun to appear, attended with all its tremblings and fearful apprehensions of an after state ! when the soul, agonizing in its pains, hath viewed things in a far different light to what it had before done, when even the riches, in which it had long trusted, fell short of giving the least satisfaction : no hope of future happiness afforded to the possessor ! but, on the contrary, a gloomy prospect of despair ; of an eternal state of misery ! Of this I have been made a sorrowful witness, that some have gone out of the world, *without God, without hope* ;\* without one comfortable reflection from the sacred ransom of a dying Saviour !

In vain have they ardently wished, in an expiring hour, that they might have been permitted

to lengthen out their allotment of life, a little longer; that they might have but a short space of added time afforded them, for the important purpose of repentance, and amendment of life; for *feeding the hungry, cloathing the naked, and visiting the sick*; virtues, to which they had no pretence, in any of their past hours, and which then it proved too late for them to attain, however necessary, for their standing approved at the last judgment, to which they were approaching!

May we all therefore learn instruction, from examples like these; and derive such advantage from this present solemnity; seeking and embracing *the good word of life*; and ever stedfastly adhering to it, so long as we continue in mutability.

May we never withdraw ourselves, from watchful attention, to the guidance of divine Providence; never indulge ourselves in arrogance, or trust too much to the rectitude of our own hearts: but *pray without ceasing*,\* that we may be enabled to *do works meet for repentance*;† and thereby attain an eternal inheritance in the kingdom of God!

Once more suffer me to intreat you, my friends, in great good will, often seriously to reflect upon the importance of the petition which I have thus far endeavoured to enforce—*Two things have I required of thee, O Lord! deny me them not be-*

\* 1 Thess. v. 17.

† Matt. iii. 8.

*fore I die.* As I am fully satisfied it is not, and will not be sufficient for me, though I should stand ever so eminently high, on the account of riches, or honours, in the esteem or applause of men; “Remove, therefore, far from me vanity and lies; giving me neither poverty nor riches; but feed me,” I pray thee, “with food convenient for me, lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.”

Ever beware of the first admission of evil.—Guard the avenues of your hearts; make it your peculiar study “so to number your days,” as to “apply your hearts unto wisdom;”\* and to advance therein, keep the account of your passing moments with greater exactness than you would wish to do of your most important temporal concerns.

It is an usual saying, “that short reckonings make long friends:” continue this short and frequent reckoning; ever esteeming “the numbering of your days aright,” to be the most necessary and blessed exercise; that hereby ye may be in a continual readiness for your final removal, how sudden soever it may be permitted.

Some of you are doubtless truly sensible of the importance of thus acquiring the divine favour; continue to “keep your hearts” in this frame,

“ with all diligence, for out of them proceed the issues of life :” \* remember too, that as we are a people who have been frequently blamed for departing from set forms, how necessary, therefore, it is for us all to keep up, in the very inmost recesses of our hearts, the daily sacrifices of prayer and praise, of fervent mental supplications, reverently to offer them to the “ Father who seeth in secret, and rewardeth openly :” † and let us never forget, that if the mind once gets off its guard, and relaxes in its earnest pursuit of the divine favour, the enemy is then most watchful to enter and to seduce. May you all, therefore, keep within the verge of innocency ; and ever let your morning oblations, and evening sacrifices, accompany your spirits to the Throne of Grace.

Ye rising tender youth, of whom there is a number in this city, for whose welfare I am at this time, and believe shall ever remain, anxiously solicitous :

May grace, mercy and peace, attend you through the succeeding steps of your lives ! May the Father of infinite mercy still accompany your spirits ! May you live in the perfect love and fear of Him ; making constant, daily inquiry into your immortal states ; always remembering, that you must one day fall beneath the stroke of death ! May your evening and morning sacrifices, therefore, of fervent prayer, and of a sincere and sted-

\* Prov. iv. 23.

† Matt. vi. 6.

fast devotion, be constantly directed up to your Creator ! Assuring yourselves, that in casting your care upon, and trusting in Him, he will remember you in his divine love ; that he will “ remove vanity and lies far from you, and feed you with food convenient for you ; ”\* that “ in blessing he will bless you : and in multiplying he will multiply ” his favours toward you ; crowning you in the end, *with joy unspeakable, and full of glory !*”†

To conclude, let us all treasure up in our minds, and firmly retain this comfortable assurance, *Verily there is a reward for the righteous ; verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth.*

\* Gen. xxii. 17.

† Peter i. 8.

*A Prayer after the foregoing Discourse.*

IT is unto Thee, the Author of all our mercies, thou most glorious and holy One ! that we presume to have recourse ; and with the deepest humility and resignation of mind, to acknowledge thy present blessings, and the diffusion of thy wisdom and goodness, with gratitude, reverence and feeling submission ! As thou best knowest what is best for us, we beg that we may be continually favoured with thy providential and Fatherly dispensations ; and with that mercy which sanctifies them, which renders them most highly instructive and useful to us : that hence we may enjoy inward peace in the time of outward trouble : we beseech Thee, thus to carry on and complete our sanctification and salvation, that in thy appointed time, we may attain “ an endless inheritance with the saints in light.”\*

We humbly request that “ all things may work together for good to those”† that are afflicted : may they profitably listen to the instructive voice of affliction ; and those who enjoy prosperity, alike improve, from the language of every mercy !

Establish us, we pray Thee, upon the holy immoveable foundation of thy ever blessed and unchangeable truth ; Thou that hast been with us,

\* Col. i. 12.

† Rom. viii. 28.

and remembered us ; and hast opened our hearts for thy admission, through the virtue of thy heavenly power and divine love. We pray Thee, in the name and spirit of thy dear Son, to direct us in the several succeeding steps of our lives ; to preserve us in an humble dependance and holy trust in thy power ; and may we be continually favoured to make mention of thy Name with joy and gladness of heart.

Lay thy hand, we pray Thee, upon such as are captivated *with vanity and lies*, before they depart hence, and be seen of men no more ; to lead them *out of darkness into thy marvellous light* :\* let the voice of the holy Spouse reach the immortal part, in such, with that comfortable and refreshing language, *Arise my love, my fair one, and come away*. Lead them, we pray, yet farther and farther, in the *path of righteousness*,† to “the perfecting of holiness in thy fear ;”‡ and let “thy rod and thy staff,” evermore, “comfort them”|| therein ; that they may not “lag behind, as in the wilderness ;” but in humble, steady obedience, “persevere, with holy circumspection ;” being thankful for all thy providential distributions, and ever patiently pronouncing the divine language of “Thy will be done !”

Enable thy ministers, with power and authority, to exalt thy Name with additional strength ; that through their faithful labours, as instruments in

\* 1 Pet. ii. 9.    † Prov. viii. 20.    ‡ 2 Cor. ii. 1.    || Psalm xxiii. 4.

thy hand, thy sacred light may arise and abundantly spread upon the habitations of darkness! O, most gracious Being! Thou that “workest in us to will and to do, according to thy good pleasure,”\* we pray Thee, bring all to thy temple; and enable them acceptably to worship Thee therein. Humble their hearts in full obedience to thy word: “lead them in the way everlasting!”† Let the first dawn of their morning, the whole course of their day, and the close of their evening, be continually directed towards Thee.

O, Thou! by whom the voice of supplication is with all readiness admitted, even from the unworthiest of thy creatures! grant, that over sea and land, “the dead in heart, in trespasses and sins,”‡ may hear thy word, feel its power in “raising them to newness of life,”§ and be finally admitted to the fellowship and communion of saints in thy kingdom!

For thy great Name’s sake, and for thy dear Son’s sake, remember all the inhabitants of this city; and those, in particular, who are now met in this place: that, through the favour of thy light and help, they may move in their several classes agreeably to the injunctions of thy holy word. Do Thou, we pray thee, animate and preserve thy ministers, elders, and heads of families; may they “be sober, and hope to the end;”¶ discharging

\* Phil. ii. 13.

† Psal. cxxxix. 24.

‡ Eph. ii. 1.

§ Rom. vi. 4.

¶ 1 Pet. i. 13.

their duties to Thee, themselves, their households, and the public ; - having on “ the helmet of salvation, the breast-plate of righteousness, the shield of faith, and sword of the spirit ; and having their feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.”\*

Speak peace, we beseech Thee, O sovereign Author of Peace ! to all that “ are labouring and heavy laden ;”† “ tossed, and not comforted ;”‡ still the perturbations of their minds, when rising and swelling, like the raging waves of the sea ; “ though the waves toss and roar, let them not prevail and pass over them.”||

Now, to Thee, whose goodness, mercy, and marvellous power, the tongues and thoughts of the most grateful and perfect of thy creatures here below, have ever fallen short of expressing or conceiving ; to Thee, with the immaculate Lamb, the Son of thy bosom, be deservedly and justly ascribed, as is most due, all honour and glory, through the succeeding pilgrimages of our lives ; and when we shall no longer remain sojourners here upon earth, may we be admitted to continue the inexhaustible theme, in the boundless habitations of thy everlasting glory, world without end. *Amen.*

\* Eph. vi. 15, 16, 17.

† Matt. xi. 28.

‡ Isaiah liv. i. 1.

|| Jer. v. 22.

*The following Discourse was delivered at the Quarterly Meeting at French-Hay, near Bristol, the 26th of the Fifth Month, 1767, in the Morning.*

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A garden enclosed is my Sister, my Spouse, a Spring shut up, a Fountain sealed.\*

THE whole Book of Canticles is understood and taken in the way of similitude, or metaphor, setting forth that close connexion, that near and dear relation, which eternally subsists between CHRIST and his Church; and in this sense it certainly conveys instruction, very profitable as well as very delightful, to that mind which hath dedicated itself to the love and obedience of Him, its only rightful LORD.

The Church is called a *Fountain of Gardens*; † which seems to me very evidently to imply that enclosed collected strength, beauty, regularity; those consolatory refreshments; that steady firmness of thought, unity of heart, and divine affection, which becomes a people that well understand what is meant by the solemn injunction of *girding up the loins of their minds*; ‡ well apprised of the

\* Cant. iv. 12.—† iv. 15.      ‡ 1 Pet. i. 13.

state of their pilgrimage; of the nature, end, and design of their being; of the necessity of *watchfulness unto prayer*;\* of having their minds brought into, and established in, the lovely order of the gospel; *their loins girded*; their faculties circumscribed, and directed to the proper purpose, the great and glorious end of their being; within the limits of that holy frame of mind, which hath *a fountain of gifts*, preparatory to every kind of useful service, for the comfort of individuals, and the united benefit of the whole body; ever abiding in the *fear of the Lord*, which is *the beginning of wisdom*;† the most perfect wisdom, by which the mind is kept clean, and preserved in its proper cloathing.

For *the fear of the Lord*, as the Psalmist expresses it, *is clean, and endureth forever*:‡ and if this fear continues to rest upon our minds, it will assuredly keep them clean; and more and more illuminate them to discern the propriety and fitness of this language of Christ to his church: *a garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse, my church*; erected and preserved by *my power*, my followers united to me, and all dear to one another, *a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people zealous of good works*.||

May we therefore all separately, each for ourselves, attend to this state, and become acquainted with that degree of resemblance of such an enclo-

\* 1 Pet. iv. 7    † Prov. i. 7, 9, 10.    ‡ Psal. xix. 9.    || 1 Pet. ii. 9.

sed garden which we bear, in the sight of Him, who, at one view, sees the several conditions of men, and beholds the state of his whole creation !

If we are enclosed, of what nature is our enclosure ? since nothing less will become our sufficient defence, than the surrounding arm of the Almighty ! He is the strength of every individual that rightly trusts in him : Their situation is aptly described in holy writ, in many parts of it, by a variety of lively and beautiful figures ; as here, by that of *a garden enclosed*, or *a fountain of gardens*.<sup>\*</sup> They likewise joyfully experience, in this sense of the text, what was meant by the song that was predicted to be sung in the land of Judah, when the divine covenant should happily cement, and enclose that favoured people in a state of innocence, integrity and love, enjoying together the lasting and unutterable sweets of divine protection and peace. *In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah ; we have a strong city ; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks :*<sup>†</sup> and I cannot but entreat that all present, who are come to years of mature consideration especially, may obey the call of God ; come out of a state of sin, and neglect of duty, and become *fellow-citizens with the saints*,<sup>‡</sup> of this city ; a city that hath *sure foundations* ;<sup>§</sup> being built upon *that rock* which *the gates of hell* have never been able to prevail against.

<sup>\*</sup> Cant. iv. 15.    <sup>†</sup> Isaiah xxvi. 1.    <sup>‡</sup> Eph. ii. 19.

<sup>§</sup> Heb. xi. 10.

<sup>§</sup> Matt. xvi. 18.

O, ye that are in the bloom of life, and surrounded with the impetuous waves of divers passions; who continue yet uncorrected, unrefined by divine grace: may you diligently and seriously reflect upon your extreme want of resemblance to *the garden enclosed*; and of answering thereby the gracious design of your Maker, concerning you! May you be directed *by the still small voice*,\* which the Lord God will make use of, and meet you with *in the garden*;† in order to reclaim you, and to draw you to himself! May all that stand in slippery places, make Him their refuge, that they may know him, to calm every tumult in the mind; to crown them with the joys of obedience; and to direct their steps aright through life, to his honour, and their own true and lasting happiness!

May all who mourn for want of a place of rest, attain this happy situation—all who are ready to cry out, as one formerly did, *Woe is me that I sojourn in Meshech, and dwell in the tents of Kedar*!‡ Woe is me, for this state of wickedness with which I am now on every side surrounded; both that of my own, and that of others round about me, who are ready to fear *the harvest is past, the summer is ended*:|| and that they are not gathered into the city walled with salvation: or the garden enclosed with divine beauty, with united and unfading joy.

\* 1 Kings xix. 12.

† Gen. iii. 8.

‡ Psalm cxx. 5.

|| Jeremiah viii. 20.

I hope better things for those whose concern sometimes appears likely to become more than they are able to bear, even a concern, lest they should be excluded from an inheritance with the sanctified.

He that of old made *the mountains skip like rams, and the little hills like lambs,\** for the miraculous preservation of his people, even when they had begun to despair of their deliverance; can still equally effect the like glorious work in restoring the desponding, the broken in heart; that, having been too much off their watch, have from thence been the more subject to be *tossed about by every wind of doctrine,†* and cunning craftiness of men; whereby they lie in wait to deceive. Know that, though your own resolutions, your own strength, and wisdom, have been insufficient (in the days that are past) for your security; and perhaps the strongest resolutions, that you have hitherto made, have been written in dust; so that the next gale of temptation hath blown them away; and you have hence been carried further and further, into a state of groaning captivity, and crying distress! and have been unable to lift up your heads in the day of trial: know, that the duly humble and repenting sinner hath ever been graciously received; and the diffident have become cloathed with divine strength, through the name and power of the Lord Jesus; their minds have been brought into a holy

\* Psalm cxiv. 4.

† Eph. iv. 12.

frame, having entered within the celestial enclosure and defence.

“ *O, that the salvation of Israel would come out of Sion, then should Jacob rejoice, and Israel should be right glad!*” This hath been the sacred language of individuals that have at times been tost in uncertainty, distressed in vanity, wickedness and disappointment; who, notwithstanding, have been at last happily fixed within the habitation of *the holy city, or garden enclosed*; through a steady perseverance and strong resistance, though in the night season; like Jacob, who as a prince, *prevailed with God and with men.\** So the sincere, the penitent sinner, in his resolute and patient conflict, imploring and relying on divine help, will at length obtain an assured victory, to his great joy, and returning of thanksgiving to the Author of all his mercies.

*A garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse*; ah, too unthinking youth! how widely different from this state is too many of yours! To you appears particularly applicable that ancient call from God, *Keep silence before me, oh ye islands!*† I beseech you, in this your time of danger, when your minds may be compared to floating islands, blown upon, and covered with a succession of waves, surrounded with temptations of various kinds, that are perpetually withdrawing you from that most precious interest, which Christ hath purchased for

\* Gen. xxxii. 28.

† Isaiah xli. 1.

you in *the garden enclosed*; I beseech you, that you maintain a steady dependance upon Him; that ye be vigilant in your pursuit after eternal enjoyments; that ye stand upon your guard against the wiles of the grand enemy to your salvation; remembering that even *when the sons of God have met together, Satan hath presented himself amongst them.\**

Doth thy mind watch with holy diligence to prayer? being fervent in spirit, that though the enemy may endeavour to come in as a flood of corruption, and seek incessantly to draw thee from the strong hold of that city, *whose walls are salvation, and whose gates are praise*;† the arm of Omnipotence may defend thee: know, thou art no farther guilty, than as thou joinest with the temptation; it is no sin to be tempted; the holy everlasting Bridegroom of the true church, was himself tried, proved, tempted, before thee, time after time, by “the ruler of the darkness of this world, the prince of the power of the air;” yet he continued unmoved, unwearied; being supported and sustained by the power of God: *He was like unto us in all things, sin only excepted*;‡ he knows and is willing to sustain them that are tempted; and to encourage in the day of battle, every one that cleaveth unto, and calleth upon him, with full purpose of heart, in the whole course and conduct of his life; though he may be deeply proved, and may sometimes be ready to cry out,—“Even

\* Job i. 6.

† Isaiah lx. 18.

‡ Hebrews iv. 15.

though the gates of death, may appear to be in motion against me, and just opening to receive me, yet if I die, Oh, let it be at thy feet!"

This hath been the language of minds, in the day of temptation; and when the battle hath been hot, they have known a secret hiding place, where the enemy could not prevail. Though he encountered the whole army of martyrs; though they were tempted, trod upon, buffeted and even crucified; yet it never was in his power to subdue them; they were still succoured by the hand of the Almighty; they were enabled to *fight the good fight of faith*;\* to pass through all their fiery trials with patience; and, in honour of their victory, are now *crowned with glory*!

How beautiful, how amiable, must be those *gardens enclosed*, the rising youth, in the vigour and prime of life! when their minds are circumscribed, and animated to piety; when they have upon them the indubitable proofs of the handy work of God; standing immoveably upright on the side of religion and virtue; keeping out all the works of darkness, by walls of divine erection!

How excellent are these gardens enclosed! their conversation and behaviour, how edifying! how exemplary! how truly honourable! their admission is sure into *that glorious house, not made with hands*,† to a perpetual festival, an eternal fruition

\* 1 Tim. vi. 12.

† 2 Cor. v. 1.

of the unspeakably rich rewards of their good works, which they have been enabled to perform, to the glorifying of their Father who is in heaven.

Than such a blessed society as this, I know of nothing that can possibly be deemed more amiable upon the face of the earth; nothing more consistent with the design of Heaven; or more resembling, for those that are young, *to remember their Creator in the days of their youth*,\* with a continual reverence; and to give up their hearts to him, in the perfection of love; for the most desirable part of the whole creation to live thus, amidst the bloom and lustre of the spring-time of life, is to constitute the *beauty of holiness*! the one great ornament of *the garden of the Lord* here on earth!

Ye heads of families! fathers, mothers, and guardians, that preside over and sustain the various relations in domestic life; ever carefully prosecute your own eternal happiness, and the happiness of all those over whom you are placed in charge! exhorting them in tender affection, and encouraging them by worthy example, to *set their affections on things above*;† watchfully guarding, and even confining them, in order to preserve them from all harms and corruptions of vice, as *gardens enclosed* within the limits of that holy fear, *which is a fountain of life, that preserves*

\* Eccles. xii. 1.

† Col. iii. 2.

*from the snares of death,\** and prepares for a crown of glory, in the regions of eternal felicity !

When the ties of nature become joined with the ties of grace, and together rest upon the minds of parents and guardians, they cannot but be solicitous that their offsprings and charge may be favoured, in an eminent degree, with divine preservation ; they would then earnestly desire to help them forward in their way, being qualified to say to the rising generation, *Follow me, as I follow Christ.* I am persuaded, had this been more generally the case, had they themselves, I say, really lived *as gardens enclosed*, within the bounds of divine wisdom and government, our Christian society would have worn a different aspect to what it now does. Could parents and heads of families, from time to time have appealed to the Searcher of Hearts, for the uprightness of their intentions, and the rectitude of their conduct in these most important concerns, then might they have said with holy confidence, *Lord ! now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace ; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation !†*

What think ye, parents ? ye that live as it were in a state of stupefaction ; what think ye of the important moment, when in the sight of God, angels, and men, inquisition for blood shall be made ? What think ye of the preparation of rendering the account with joy at the dread tribunal of final judg-

\* Prov. xiii. 14.

† Luke ii. 29, 30.

ment? in which an inquiry into the discharge of your several duties, in this respect, will most assuredly be made? It is possible, and indeed I cannot but believe it consistent with the goodness of the Supreme Being, that, where the natural parents have been negligent in the discharge of this important trust, and have conducted their offspring into bye-ways and crooked paths, forgetful of the way that leadeth to life eternal, the everlasting Father hath not been wholly unmindful of his children, thus abandoned to the wiles of the destroyer; but hath frequently reached forth a kind hand to such, and will continue to make up to them, who gratefully receive his kindness, and obey his voice, the deficiency of such past paternal care; even by the virtue of his living power in their hearts: in the mean time, the very criminal neglect of such parents will, notwithstanding this, draw down on them its own weight of condemnation: "the hand-writing on the wall," will still remain against them, and, like wicked Belshazzar, they will be *weighed in the balance, and found wanting*.\*

Indeed it must be confessed, and I am thoroughly assured, that all parents are not thus negligent: I cannot but remember the inestimable father I had in early life; and, above all things, his almost unexampled care and tenderness over his infant offspring. I well remember the very powerful and moving eloquence of descending tears! when

\* Daniel v. 5, 27.

he collected his numerous family of little ones about him, and in the time of our extreme tenderness, and very early years, how often he hath wept over us, when he hath been recommending us to the throne of grace ! though I cannot repeat the immediate language he uttered upon these occasions, which were so extremely interesting to us all !

I wandered, as to myself, indeed I may say, and strayed from the *garden enclosed*, in many of the succeeding steps of my life ; and even now stand *as a monument of mercy amongst you !* whilst I thus afresh remember and recite this amazing instance of a tender parent's anxious and unabated care, for our preservation out of the evils that abound in the world ; for our having a safe place within the inclosures, where Christ *feedeth his flock, and maketh them to rest at noon !\**

O, fathers and mothers ! I beseech you, by the mercies of God, and the solemn account you must one day close with Him, that you lay this charge seriously to heart ; still offering up your humble petitions to the *Father of Light*, that he would enable you, more and more, to instruct the children he hath blessed you with, in the *one thing needful* ; in order that being thus favoured, thus enlightened and enlarged by his power, you may have nothing to do but die, when that time shall arrive ; nothing to charge yourselves with, in

*A Prayer after the foregoing Discourse.*

WE approach thy presence, O Father of infinite kindness ! and make mention of thy Name, in a deep and awful sense of thy mercy, which hath followed us from time to time, and most graciously encouraged us, even to open our hearts before thee ! the Lord of heaven and the whole earth !

We were cast upon rocks, and there left in a destitute and perishing state ; when thou manifested thy tender regard, stretched forth thy delivering hand, and fed and sustained us by thy watchful providence ! Thou wast pleased to look upon us in mercy, in the days of our temporal calamities ! to reveal to us the saving arm of thy power, and to cause those very calamities to turn to our solid advantage ! Thou, who art encircled with light, didst enlighten our darkness ; gave us clearly to understand the great things of thy law ; such of them as thou in thy wisdom saw necessary for us. In the day of our utmost need, thou wast pleased to appear for us, and to speak comfort to our afflicted states !

We earnestly beg, that the grateful sense of all these thine unutterably kind dealings with us, may be imprinted on our hearts in characters never to be obliterated ! What more have we to ask, but that thou may ever continue to guide and direct

us! that such a sense of thy unmerited mercies may be to us, as often heretofore it hath been, an enlivening comfort, and a strong support in the day of trouble: and we beseech Thee, O, blessed Father! to remember all in the like situation: send forth "thy light and thy truth," even amongst those who have never known, or have long forgotten thee. We pray thee, draw them into thy holy house; plant them in thine enclosed, forever beautiful, and most excellent garden! their hearts becoming hereby powerfully inclined to attend, with a fixed and unlimited submission, to the salutary discipline of thine omnipresent, and unerring wisdom!

If thou see any cast upon the bed of languishing, do thou be pleased, we humbly pray Thee, to afford them the visitation of thy love: let thy divine consolation be their continual attendant, whereby they may be endued with perfect resignation to thy blessed will!

O, Thou! that hast poured into our hearts, the fresh and reviving sense of thy unbounded love! accept, we beseech Thee, our prayers for our own preservation, and the lifting up of our hands for one another, for the gathering together of many to thyself; who art, and hast been, the restorer of many that have been scattered abroad, that have gone astray, being seduced by various temptations, from thy sacred truth!

made about us,) being broke down; I cannot help expressing my concern, and using my speedy and vigilant efforts to prevent, as much as possible, the beginning and increase of so great an evil.

Is there even a servant lad, or a servant girl, that hath continued neglected, and their minds left to wander at will? I cannot but feel for them, with an earnest desire of informing such, and drawing them, if possible, within the limits of the garden enclosed; that they might enjoy the benefit and delightful assurance of immortal happiness, from their entrance into, and continuance in well doing! Many fly from their own interest, forget the God that made them, and even *account the blood of the covenant as an unholy thing,\** for want of having their minds properly centered, and their judgments duly enlightened; and therefore it is all your duty, who are advanced within the heavenly bounds, and are grown up into a capacity of service, so faithfully to improve your talents, that ye may become instrumental, to enlighten their understanding, and to administer to them a suitable degree of spiritual health: not to say, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” but if ye love God, to love your brother also: to lead him within the heritage and limits of the enclosed garden; within the “impregnable defence of that city whose walls are salvation.”

I know well, friends, that though my education was within the garden enclosed, yet I wandered far from it; and in my departing, laid myself open to the enemy of my soul. I kept the worst of company; I subjected myself to almost every temptation; broke through the fence of the sacred enclosure! trampled it under my feet! and when for a time I found the least inclination to do good, evil was present with me! and I went on from one degree of it to another! my wickedness so far increased with my diligence, that at length, alas! I beheld the strong wall broken down! the garden wall destroyed! the mound left defenceless! and no hopes left of returning peace to my afflicted soul!

O ye, who are the hopes of the next generation! the steps I have trod, warrant me to expostulate with, and to warn you of the most dreadful danger of that deviation, to which youth is too prone, for want of due and timely reflection, suitable to its vast importance; and the extreme difficulty of treading back, or extricating yourselves from it, when the mind is once engaged and entered into the path of folly: believe me, now is your acceptable time; now is the day of the Lord's tender mercy afforded to you: flatter not yourselves, therefore, with the hope of its being time enough, that in some future part of your lives you will diligently seek him: now is your seed-time; your hour of profitable diligence; and not in the decline of life. Life frequently is held by a moment of time! it passes, and man is no more seen! *All*

*flesh is grass, and its beauty as the flower of the field; the grass withereth, and the flower fadeth.\** The grave, to which we are all hastening, ought to be an early lesson of serious instruction, sounding the alarm in the ears of every youth; seeing it is frequently opened to receive its victims in the very bloom of life! and *before the years draw nigh, in which, (in the course of nature,) they can take no pleasure†—boast not, therefore, thyself of to-morrow, since thou knowest not what a day may bring forth;‡* but rather let the examples of others teach thee, the absolute necessity of improving the present moments; and duly to reflect upon the imminent danger of delay.

If thy delight be not now within the garden enclosed, thou canst not reasonably expect hereafter to do *works meet for repentance: ||* believe me, the evening hour will have its fill of work, even after discharging the duty of the most diligent day; though thou begin this necessary work immediately, thou wilt not have a moment to spare, when thy sands of life are hastening to a close, and thou art finally appointed to tread the silent and solemn path of death! which is an hour that will, doubtless, bring with it a sufficient employment to the most serious mind, and to the most assiduous improver of the time that hath been allotted to him in mutability.

\* Isaiah xl. 6.

† Eccles. xii. 1.

‡ Prov. xxvii. 1.

|| Acts xxvi. 20.

O then, ye beloved youth ! that your minds may be thus properly exercised to lay hold on the things that belong to your everlasting peace ! may you lay these reflections seriously to heart ; and may their good effects demonstrate that they have a powerful and proper influence upon your conduct, through the whole series of your lives : that ye may finish your course with joy ! and be crowned in the end with glory and immortality ! having faithfully answered the boundless love of Christ to his Church, whose peculiar relation to himself, he expresseth in this endearing language, *A garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse ; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed.*

relation to the neglect of this great duty, when the measure of your days shall be accomplished ; but may render up your accounts *with joy*, and receive the beatific sentence of *well done good and faithful servant ; thou hast been faithful in a little ; I will make thee ruler over more, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.\**

*A garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse.—* May we pay all due honour to the testimony of Christ respecting his Church, both as individuals, as heads of families, and parents of children ; and more and more sustain, with diligence and propriety, in all our several stations, the character of gardens enclosed ; or be as “ plants therein, of the Lord’s own right-hand planting ;” plentifully adorned and enriched with all the good fruits of his own Spirit ; that we may be as our fathers were in the day when the Lord raised them up, fed, and miraculously supported them ! and may fervently pray, *that Sion might arise and shine, and shake herself from the dust of the earth : and put on her beautiful garments !†* and that many amongst us, who yet need it, might shake themselves from those outward things that adorn them, as they vainly imagine ; that “ divine beauty and lustre,” which once conspicuously shined upon and adorned our Sion, may again be restored, and continue to dwell amongst us : and, in order to this, may we study more and more the increase of righteousness and true holiness ; encouraging one ano-

\* Matt. xxv. 21.

† 1saiah lii. 1, 2.—lx. 1

ther by good example, and by tender counsel in the pursuit thereof; as we cannot, consistent with our love of God, be indifferent in our wishes for the happiness and welfare of any of our fellow creatures, nor say of our brother, "Let him alone, leave him to himself, it is sufficient for me to mind myself." Since it is our immediate duty to watch over him, and to be ready, on every occasion, tenderly to advise and assist, to prevent or support him; and not answer the Lord, when he shall require an account of his welfare from me,—*Am I my brother's keeper?*\*

At this door, my friends, unspeakable damage hath entered, and widely spread amongst us as a people; even through this neglect, the grand deceiver hath the more easily broke into this and the other family; the power of seduction hath taken place; and many young people may be said to have laid violent hands on their own souls, and those of others too, in their gradual stepping out of the *garden enclosed*.

"Am I my brother's keeper? What have I to do with the welfare of another?" This hath greatly obstructed the increase of our felicity, as a collective body; the progress of our Sion; and introduced the destroyer; who hath broke into our enclosure, and made a sorrowful devastation among the flock and family of God. Where I see thus the danger of the hedge (which the Lord in mercy

\* Genesis ii. 6.

For thy great Name's sake, for thy dear Son's sake, and for the sake of thy glorious cause of righteousness! we pray Thee, remember the offspring of thy people! incline and strengthen them more and more, to turn towards Thee; and "to run the race that is set before them;"\* that in the places of the honourable fathers, removed to thy kingdom, may succeed their sons; steadily walking in their footsteps, to the glory of thy Name; that generation to generation may tell thy acts, and age to age pronounce thy goodness and marvellous power! who, through manifold temptations and trials, preservest "unspotted from the world," them who trust in Thee, and adhere to the dictates of thy grace!

Be with the people assembled here at this time; and in a particular manner with those that are thine in heart, and dedicated to thy service. Endue, we pray Thee, with the spirit of sound judgment, "those that sit in judgment; and strengthen those who are enlisted into thine army, "engaged under thy banner, and that turn the battle to the gate," that they may so act, and "so fight the good fight of faith,"† as to lay hold on eternal life! which thou art now, in this the day of thy mercy, freely offering unto all!

May the ministers and stewards of thy word, cheerfully proceed in thy glorious cause, speaking powerfully in wisdom to all, that many may be

\* Heb. xii. 1.

† 1 Tim. vi. 12.

come, through their calls, yet more and more ardently inclined to listen to the doctrine of thy Son, and to be instructed in thy law, immediately from His internal voice in their own hearts.

O, holy and infinite Father of all our mercies! grant, we beseech Thee, that, being preserved in our stations, as those who are "risen with Christ, our affections may be set on things which are above," and our life hid with them, in Thee our God; that "when He who is our life shall appear, we also may appear with him in glory!"\*

May all our faculties, and all that is within us, bless thy great and excellent name! May we perpetually approach thy throne with confidence, to offer Thee the oblation of humble prayer, and grateful praise and thanksgiving, now, henceforth, and for ever, world without end! Amen.

\* Colossians iii. 1, 2, 3, 4.

*The following Discourse was delivered at Horsley-down Meeting, 1768.*

THERE is a passage in sacred writ, which has been revived in my remembrance during the silence of this meeting, and the train of reflections which it excited, has sealed instruction to my mind, and furnished me with renewed cause of humiliation and gratitude :

*“ Men and Brethren, what shall we do to be saved ? ”\**

Every person who seriously believes in the existence of a God, in a future state, and in the awful doctrine of rewards and punishments, cannot be indifferent respecting what may be his lot, when he shall be dispossessed of this frail tabernacle of clay which he now inhabits, and which is approaching to the period of its dissolution ; it cannot be a matter of indifference to him, whether he shall finally receive the irrevocable sentence of *go ye cursed into the regions of irremediable misery* : † or *come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for the righteous, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord, and into thy Master's rest.* ‡ This concern has prompted many to enquire what is essentially necessary for them to believe and

\* Acts ii. 37.

† Matt. xxv. 41.

‡ Matt. xxv. 34.

practise, in order to render them the proper objects of divine complacence, and furnish them with a well-grounded hope of a glorious and happy immortality. Many of the honest and sincere of every nation under heaven, have formed different ideas of the requisites to salvation, and of course have pursued as different measures to accomplish that desirable end. It is not my present business, to particularize any of those various systems of faith, which are adopted by any party amongst mankind; it is not to controvert matters, in which sincere men of the various denominations most surely believe; but rather to recommend them always to stand open to conviction, and a strict attention to those rules of conduct, which appear to them most agreeable to the will of Heaven. I shall therefore address myself to those, in whatever religious society they are found, whose honest enquiries have not yet been attended with sufficient conviction, or led them clearly to perceive what are the terms on which their future happiness depends, and who are therefore looking one upon another, whilst this important question is found, at least in their hearts, if not in their mouths:

*Men and brethren, what shall we do to be saved?*

I shall not presume arrogantly to dictate to any respecting matters of so important a concern, as that of the salvation of the soul; every man should exercise those talents with which the Father of Lights has endued him, in a close and sincere attention to the voice of the internal Teacher, and

in the discovery of those truths, both practical and speculative, which have an immediate relation to the happiness of a being circumstanced as he is. I shall simply propose those things, which, from my own experience as an individual, appear to me worthy of God for their author, and worthy of man's most serious attention. It is an indisputable truth, that we made not ourselves: *we are thine offspring, thou hast made us, and not we ourselves*, says the Prophet, in his appeal to God.

The matter which forms the universe, the vehicles which the soul informs, and the intellectual powers and faculties we possess, derived their being from the Eternal Fountain of all power and intelligence, whom we characterize by the awful names of Jah, Jehovah, and God. It is also clear to me, that we were brought into existence with the benevolent design of finally sustaining the confluent dignities of glory, honour, immortality and eternal life: the Lord Almighty hath, in unspeakable mercy promised, that after we have endured a season of probation on earth, a conflict with our passions, excited by numerous causes, and a fight of afflictions, we should finally receive a glorious reward, a perpetuity of unmixed felicity in the unknown regions of eternity. But this desirable and excellent end, is not to be effected by what is generally called fate, the laws of necessity, or the arbitrary will and power of the Author of our existence. God has constituted us free and intelligent beings, and endued us with faculties capable of apprehending and practising those duties which

he makes the condition of our final acceptance with him : he offers, but does not impose happiness on his creatures ; he shews us the spiritual Canaan, he gives us power to possess it, but does not compel us to enter into it ; good and evil are clearly set before us, but our election is not constrained to either ; the Sovereign of the universe is no respecter of persons, for of one blood he made all nations that dwell on the face of the earth ; they stand in the same relation to the universal Father, Shepherd and Bishop of Souls, who tenderly invites the whole race of mankind to inherit the joy of his salvation.

To this doctrine, the holy apostle bore an ample and explicit testimony : “ Of a truth, (said he,) I perceive that God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation, those who fear him and work righteousness, shall be accepted of him.”\*—“ If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die ; but if through the Spirit ye mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.”† This is a proposition that relates to every individual in the vast community of mankind, however circumstanced, whether bond or free, or in whatever climate he resides.

All this, indeed, may be acknowledged both by those within and without the audience of my voice, who are yet in doubt what they shall do to be saved with an everlasting salvation ; they want to be informed of the precise ideas that should be affixed

\* Acts x. 34, 35.

† Romans viii. 13.

to the conditions contained in the text, though perhaps they readily apprehend the terms life and death, imply future happiness and misery. I shall therefore attempt, according to the ability I am endowed with, to give you my thoughts on the important subject in question at this time.

To "*live after the flesh*," is to live in the gratification of our animal appetites and passions, beyond the bounds of reason, temperance and sobriety; which, as it frequently introduces numerous disorders into the animal system, and aggravates the infirmities to which these corruptible bodies are incident; so it affects the good of society, and renders unfit for those contemplations and that felicity, which is adapted to the dignity of rational and immortal spirits, beings whom God in his wisdom *has made a little* (and perhaps but a little) *lower than the angels*,\* and who would crown them with a superior glory, honour and happiness, to that which animal gratifications can confer on their deluded votaries.

Whilst we are in the body, we must expect to find those appetites, affections and passions which belong to our nature; but these are to be restricted within the bounds of virtue, and attended to, in proportion to our exigencies and necessities, of which the divine principle which God has graciously implanted in our hearts, ought to determine.

\* Hebrews ii. 7.

This principle of intelligence, although called by a variety of names in the different professions amongst men, is the same in nature throughout all mankind. It is the spirit in man that giveth a right understanding; it is the light that more or less enlightens every man; it is the word of God in the heart; the word of faith which the apostle preached to the gentiles; it is the grace that hath appeared to all men, teaching them to deny ungodliness and the world's lusts, and to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world; and, finally, it is the supreme reason, the law of truth and rectitude, the test of virtue and vice, which God himself hath erected in the hearts of all men; and happy are those who hear and obey it in all things!

I would not be understood to mean, that this principle of which I am speaking, is designed to instruct us in all truths which the human mind may attempt to investigate, or to give a clear insight into those numerous speculative subjects, which have, not only unprofitably employed mankind, and diverted their attention from more substantial objects, but which have perplexed and divided them from generation to generation; but by the exercise of it, we may apprehend those truths that belong to us, and have an essential relation to the important end of our existence; of which truths, the Father of Spirits has enabled us to judge: this is implied by the question which our Lord himself proposed to a people misled by the traditions of their fathers, and who had taken

for doctrine the commandments of men,—*yea, and why judge ye not for yourselves, what is right ?\**

Various are our obligations and duties, religious, relative and social, arising from our various connexions, natural and divine: the relation we stand in to the Author of our being, is that of children; filial fear, obedience and worship, is therefore our indispensable duty to him, in our conduct at all times, throughout our whole lives. The relation which our fellow creatures stand in to us, is that of brethren, children of the same universal Father, and formed for the same glorious and happy end; justice, charity and brotherly kindness are therefore our indispensable obligations unto mankind. There are also various accidental relations; such as father, governor, master, servant, and numerous others, all which have their correspondent duties. Thus far, perhaps, the persons whom I immediately address at this time, may concur with me in sentiment, but they, as well as I, are perhaps conscious of having failed in numerous instances of discharging their religious duties to God, and their social duties to mankind. We have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God; we have multiplied our transgressions without number! and our iniquities rise before us as a thick cloud! which obscures the brightness of that eternal Sun of righteousness, which would otherwise illuminate our understandings with its

marvellous light. Who, therefore, (says the illuminated penitent soul) shall deliver us from the body of this death? who shall take from us the weight of our sins under which we groan incessantly? who shall save us from the wrath to come?

*Men and brethren, what shall we do to be saved?*

The condition of our reconciliation and redemption, are very clearly expressed in the sacred oracles of truth; the placability of the divine nature is repeatedly asserted; he is represented to us in the adorable character of a God of mercy, long suffering, and of unspeakable kindness; as a Being, ready to blot out our transgressions from the celestial register, on our sincere repentance, and to remember them no more.

This important and interesting doctrine was typified under the law, spoken of by the prophets, and gloriously asserted by the Son of God, who is our Mediator with the Father, and the hope of our future glory. In his character was displayed to mankind, in the most eminent and striking manner, the provident care, mercy and goodness of God, toward the whole rational creation; who like sheep have gone astray from the universal Shepherd and Bishop of Souls, who have widely wandered from the paths of purity and holiness, which are ways of pleasantness and peace; that path of the just man, which (like the luminous orb as it arises in our hemisphere) shines with increasing refulgency, splendour and brightness, till it arrives

at the meridian altitude of a gloriously perfect day! This path leads all who steadily pursue its direction, by degrees of experience, through the wilderness of this world, to the grand and ultimate end of our creation, to that complete fruition of bliss that is figuratively represented to us by *a City that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God* ;\* *a City whose walls are salvation, and whose gates are eternal praise* ;† *a City that hath no need of the elementary light of sun, moon and stars, for the Lord God and the Lamb are the light thereof* ;‡ *a City where God reigns triumphantly amongst his saints, and is to them an inexhaustible fountain of Light and Felicity* ; there the weary pilgrim finds an end of all his anxiety and labour, and receives the reward of his faith, the fruition of his hopes, even the salvation of his soul !

The important message which Christ had in commission from his Father and our Father, from his God and our God, was, that he compassionated his creatures, encompassed with the distresses which their sins had brought upon them ; that he willed not their everlasting separation from Him, the source of happiness ; that he was willing they should be reconciled to him ; he therefore called upon them to “ Repent and be converted, that their sins might be forgiven them, and that they might finally enter into his rest.”

\* Heb. xi. 10.

† Isaiah ix. 18.

‡ Rev. xxi. 23.

This was the interesting doctrine which the Saviour of man promulgated, and happy are those who hear and obey it! *Repent and be converted, that your sins may be forgiven you.*

It is not the assent of the lip and of the tongue to the glorious truths of the gospel; but a surrender of the will and affections, a renovation of heart, and conformity to the Divine image, which can alone gain us admission into the New Jerusalem, the City of God!

If we take an impartial survey of our past lives, review our frequent revoltings, and compare our conduct with the convictions we have often received of right and wrong, virtue and vice, there is scarcely a soul present but must feel some degree of remorse, some degree of repentance for the turpitude of his morals, and his want of love, obedience and gratitude to so gracious a Father, who has encompassed us with blessings, and preserved us by his providence, from the earliest period of our lives to the present hour; we must (I say again) upon serious retrospection, possess some degree of repentance; but unhappily for us, the impressions that are made on our minds by such a review of our actions, are frequently erased by the influence which a variety of creaturely objects are suffered to have upon us, and like the early dew, they soon pass away.

Those who have been cleansed in some degree by the water of contrition, are often defiled again

by the repetition of that iniquity, which in the moments of their humiliation they had determined to renounce and forsake, they are again caught in the snare of their lusts, and captivated by those objects which have a tendency to alienate their affections from the Supreme Good. Thus, when the force of conviction again sounds the awakening alarm, they are ready to query with surprise and anxiety, "what is to be done in this afflictive dilemma to which our inconstancy to our virtuous resolutions has reduced us? shall we despair of that divine mercy we have so often abused, of that goodness we have so long trifled with?" God forbid! rather prostrate your souls at the Throne of Grace, and humbly implore the continued mercy of the universal Parent. As a father pitieth his children, so he pitieth them that fear him; he knoweth our frame, he remembereth that we are but dust; beseech him therefore to send help from his holy sanctuary, that you may be strengthened to renew and keep your covenants with him; refrain from the commission of evil, and wait on him in the silence of all flesh; since it hath pleased him again to enlighten your darkness, and thus to give you to see yourselves as you are seen of him; he may also be pleased to inflame your hearts with that celestial fire which purgeth away all the intellectual filth and dross, that prevents the ascent of the soul God-ward, and renders it an unfit habitation for his holiness to dwell in. As our back-slidings have frequently corrected us, and covered our minds with anxiety, let our future conduct, directed by his grace, atone for what is

past, and by a conversation ordered aright, let us glorify our Father who is in heaven!

I feel at this season the influence (in degree) of that celestial charity which breathes through Immanuel to the whole creation of God, wishing salvation to every soul that inhabits the earth; in which I intreat you (as a being subject to the same infirmities which you sometimes unavoidably deplore,) *repent and be converted*; repentance you have frequently experienced, but too little I fear of that essential conversion which the gospel of Jesus proposes. It is highly probable, that some persons present have seen the necessity of that renovation of heart, and reformation of manners intended by conversion; but urged by the powerful prevalency of their lusts, would, if possible, find some other remedy for a wounded conscience, than that which the simplicity of the gospel requires, as a necessary prelude to the favour of God; like the young man in the gospel, they have been animated with a desire to be enroled amongst the disciples of Jesus, who are called heirs of God, and co-heirs with Christ, of that inheritance which is incorruptible and full of glory; they have asked counsel of the Wonderful Counsellor, addressing him with this important question,—*what good thing shall I do, that I may inherit eternal life?*\* yet when the unchangeable terms of salvation have been proposed, when they have been told that they must part with all their idols, they have gone

\* Mark i. 17.

away sorrowful ; the terms have appeared too hard for them to comply with ; and like Naaman, who wanted to be cured of his leprosy, yet was staggered at the simplicity of the prophet's direction, are crying out, *are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel, may I not wash in them and be clean ?*\* Thus numbers amongst mankind, are striving to elude the measures which the gospel of Jesus enjoins, and are substituting others in their stead, which are better adapted to sooth the carnal mind, and prevent that mortification which human nature shrinks from.

Man is desirous to possess the crown of eternal life, but not to bear the cross ; he would indeed reign with Christ, but not suffer with him ; he would accompany him to the mount of transfiguration, but not to Golgotha : he would be his attendant at his glorification, but not in the awful scenes of his humiliation.

Divers have wandered as from mountain to mountain, and from hill to hill, seeking for the living in the sepulchres of the dead ; they have sometimes adopted one creed, and sometimes another, practised external ordinances, and complied with empty forms, addressing themselves frequently to guides as blind and impotent as themselves, with this awful enquiry,—*men and brethren, what shall we do to be saved ?* I say

\* 2 Kings v. 12.

again, *repent and be converted*; for this is the only way to find salvation to your souls; no external ceremonies, no verbal confessions, nor any change of opinions merely, can accomplish this repentance and conversion, and afford you the consequent reward of a glorious immortality; this important work of salvation, must be effected in man, by the powerful operation of the Holy Ghost, which is a consuming fire to the adverse part in man, to the corrupt and perverse will, which would not that Christ should reign in his kingdom, and that God should be all in all. It is the baptism of fire, (of which John's was but a type) which, discriminating the pure from the impure, gathers the wheat into the garner, but consumes the chaff with unquenchable burnings.

In the world there are many voices which correspond not with the voice of Christ, the only Shepherd of souls, (whom we ought to hear and obey in all things) but are the voices of those who preach for hire, and divine for money; who look for their gain from their respective quarters; and as to such conscientious men who cannot put into their mouths, they are ready to make war against them; these have found it for their worldly interest, to lead the deluded people from, rather than to Christ, that glorious High Priest of the christian religion; they have attempted to render that mysterious, which the Holy Ghost has left clear, and to perplex the understandings of mankind with vain metaphysical speculations, without making them wiser or better. This class of men, whose

God is their belly, and whose glory is their shame, have indeed proved physicians of no real value; instead of laying the axe to the root of the corrupt tree, they have only attempted to lop off some of its branches; they have prescribed emollients, where the most searching operations were expedient; and healing the wound of the daughter of Zion deceitfully, have lulled multitudes into a fatal security, flattering them with hopes, which it is to be feared, will finally end in disappointment.

There are others, who assume the office of ministers, (the purity of whose intentions my charity will not permit me to doubt,) who, like a man that attempts to answer a question before he has fully heard it, have too precipitately embarked in the important work of instructing souls relative to the affairs of salvation; these are like Ephraim, *a cake not turned*,\* are not yet instructed in the way of God perfectly; and whilst they are teaching others, had need themselves to be taught what are the first principles of the oracles of God; they have run on the Lord's errand unsent, and therefore have not essentially profited the people; they have taken upon them to guide those who are enquiring what they shall do to be saved, and have led them indeed from the confines of Egypt, but leave them (undirected to the spiritual Moses) to wander in uncertainty, and to compass a mountain of doubts in the wilderness. May the Lord Almighty, in his mercy, gather those who are wandering as

\* Hosea vii. 8.

sheep without a shepherd, and lead them into the sacred inclosure of his fold, into eternal safety.

Let it not be thought, from any thing I have said, that I look upon all those who appear girded with the linen Ephod, of other christian societies, either as impostors, or the deluded votaries of antichrist ; I freely declare, that I doubt not but many of them have had a dispensation of the gospel committed to them, and although they may be biassed by the prejudice of education, and the traditions of their fathers, yet the root of the matter seems to be in them ; and I esteem these (in whatever society they are found, or in whatever vestments they are cloathed) as my brethren in the fellowship of the everlasting gospel of Christ ; yet I cannot direct the searcher after truth, who is pensively enquiring what he shall do to be saved, to the ministry of any man, but would rather recommend him to the immediate teaching of the word nigh in the heart, even the Spirit of God ; this is the only infallible Teacher, the primary adequate rule of faith and practice, and will lead those who attend to its dictates, into the peaceable paths of safety and of truth.

*Ye need not* (says the holy apostle to the church formerly) *that any man teach you, save as this anointing teacheth, which is truth, and no lie ;\** cease, therefore, from man, whose breath is in his nostrils, and whose existence is but a vapour,

\* 1 John ii. 27.

for wherein is he to be accounted of? as a fallible being, he is liable to frequent deceptions, and therefore liable to deceive; whereas the Spirit of God cannot be deceived, neither will it deceive any soul that yields itself to its government, and obeys its dictates.

O, ye penitent prodigals! my soul earnestly longs for your restoration to the mercy and favour of God! ye who are reduced by your wanderings in the wilderness of this world, to a state of extreme poverty, to the want of that bread that comes down from the celestial regions above, which alone can nourish the soul up unto eternal life! ye who are attempting to satisfy the cravings of an immortal spirit, with the spiritless husks and shells of an empty profession of religion! look towards your Father, from whom you have revolted; remember, that in his house there is bread enough and to spare; there your souls may be replenished with ever-enduring substance: return, O house of Israel! and seek the face of your everlasting Friend and Father! he has in unspeakable kindness, declared that he will be found of those who seek him in sincerity of heart, and that as many as knock at the gate of mercy for an entrance, shall be admitted to his presence, and receive the remission of their sins.

The humble address which the prodigal made to his father (in that excellent parable given us by Christ) the father's reply to it, and the manner of his reception into favour, is exceedingly expressive

of the becoming penitence of the one, and the mercy of the other ; *I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son; make me therefore, as one of thy hired servants.\** The injured parent compassionates his distress, takes the prodigal in his arms, owns him for his son ; orders the fatted calf to be killed, and rebukes the envy of his elder brother, with—*this my son was dead, but is alive again, was lost, but is found!* O, the height and depth of the goodness and mercy of God ! look unto him all ye ends of the earth, and be ye saved !

Before I conclude, I find it in my heart to address another class in this meeting ; a class, who have earnestly sought and happily found Him, of whom Moses and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth the Immanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us ; you, who once were scattered as sheep without a shepherd, and on the barren mountains and desolate hills of an empty profession, but the great Shepherd of Souls hath gathered you within the sacred enclosure of his sheep-fold, and you are under the peculiar protection of the Lord Almighty ; you hath he plucked as brands out of the burning, and, redeemed to himself with the saving strength of his right arm ; may you ever remember his unutterable mercy, and dedicate the remaining moments of life to the honour of his Name ! My soul salutes you in the endeared affection of the Gospel of Peace, and wishes

\* Luke xv. 21.

your establishment in righteousness, that you may abide in holy patience, the fiery trial of your faith, throughout the days of your pilgrimage on earth, and become as fixed pillars in the celestial building, the house of God, that shall go no more out.

If ye abide in the word of faith by which ye have been taught, the malice of men nor devils, nor all the united powers of darkness, shall be able to pluck you out of the hand of Him, who is your Judge, your King, your Protector, your Father, and your everlasting Friend. When the earth shall be wrapped together as a scroll, and the sun and moon be darkened, when every constellation of the heavens sinks into everlasting obscurity, and the elements of this world shall melt with fervent heat, you will possess an habitation within the superior regions of a new heaven and a new earth, where the Lord your Righteousness dwells.

Many of the pretended wise, learned and prudent, who have sought to climb up some other way, rather than enter by Christ, who is the door (by the conditions which he has proposed) into the sheep-fold, may pity you as fools, or ridicule you as enthusiasts, count your lives madness, and your end to be without honour; but they will one day be astonished at the strangeness of your salvation, when they see, to their confusion, that you are finally numbered amongst the children of God, and that the lot of your inheritance is amongst the saints. In the world, you are to expect tribula-

tions of various kinds; pain, sickness, temptations and disappointments invade the breast of the most righteous and temperate amongst men: the cup of mixture (more or less impregnated with the worm-wood and the gall) is the lot of all men, designed doubtless to effect a valuable purpose, by Him who afflicts not willingly, nor without a righteous and benevolent cause, the children of men; as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are the ways of the Almighty wisdom higher than our ways, and his thoughts than our thoughts! we see a little, but a very little of the amazing universal plan of his government over rational and immortal spirits. It lies beyond the reach of the most exalted human faculties to comprehend his wisdom, throughout the righteous administration of his Providence, which is unsearchable! It is our duty, as frail dependent beings, to meet every dispensation of his providence, with that resignation of spirit, which incessantly breathes the humble language of *not my will, O Lord! but thine, be done in all things!*

Under the evils which we feel, and which our prudence could not prevent, let us rather implore divine aid to endure them with patience, than to pray they may be removed from us; lest, like ignorant children, we should seek to avoid that portion from our heavenly Father's hand, which he graciously designed to remove or prevent a greater evil. This is not the place of your rest, but a state of probation, a painful pilgrimage, a land of

pits and snares, through which lies a narrow path to the regions of eternal peace.

The soul, by reason of its connexion with the body, enclosed within the walls of flesh, cannot extend its views, and employ its faculties on divine objects, without frequent interruption; but when the days of its captivity are accomplished, it will be capable of a more glorious expansion in the kingdom of Immortality, and (if bearing the inscription of holiness) will be put in possession of that joy which is unspeakable and full of glory. Therefore, in all those calamities to which we are subject in the house of our pilgrimage, we have a place of refuge to flee to, where safety is alone to be found; though indeed we must feel in degree as men, yet we may possess the patience, resignation and holy fortitude of Christians, who are looking for a better country, a more excellent inheritance in that city whose inhabitant cannot say—*I am sick.*

Be ye therefore stedfast, immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour shall not be in vain. Be ye in your several stations in the church, and in the world, as way-marks to the honest enquirers who are asking their way to Zion, and from a true sense of their condition, are crying out, *what shall we do to be saved?* shew forth by your example of charity, sobriety, temperance and holiness of life, that you are redeemed from the spirit of the world, that lies in wickedness; be not capti-

vated by its trifling amusements, nor ensnared by its lying vanities, but retain the fear of the Lord, which will keep the heart clean, and prove a source of surest consolation, when all things else will be unavailing ! let the purity of your lives demonstrate that you are attentive to things more excellent, things that are permanent and eternal, essentially relating to the salvation of the soul ! by this means you will become the consecrated temples of the Holy Ghost, and be a means of leading others in the way of righteousness !

Finally, my brethren, farewell ! I commend you to God, the Shepherd of Israel, and to the word of his grace ; this is alone able to build us up in the most holy faith, to direct our feet in the way of righteousness and peace ; and finally, to put us in possession of a glorious inheritance amongst the saints, that will never fade away.

*A Discourse delivered at Stockport, the 20th of  
the Eleventh Month, 1768.*

AN acceptable sacrifice, which the holy apostle offered unto the God of all Grace, is at all times proper, and at all times acceptable, arising from the same sensibility; it was couched in these words:—

*Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift.*

It arose from one not a whit behind the apostle, whose acquired parts were remarkably great, and justly eminent for his religious experience: yet in the contemplation of the height and depth, the length and breadth of the love of God in Jesus Christ our Lord, and the manifestation of divine kindness, he found expressions insufficient; and, in short, said more than language could express, in terming it—*an unspeakable gift.*

I would endeavour to lead our minds to a proper contemplation upon this unspeakable gift, and earnestly wish we may be so wise as to enter into it with that reverence, with that attention, and with solemn worship, which become worthy receivers of a multitude of unmerited mercies.

The holy Scriptures of the New Testament, (which are preserved through mercy) give us a

large and particular account of the incarnation, life, sufferings, death, and ascension of the holy Jesus ; and it were much to be wished, there was a more general attention amongst the professors of the name of Christ, to ponder his adorable acts, endeavouring to accompany him in reverent recollection of the various steps he took whilst in the body prepared for him ; as it might lay a well grounded hope (if we accompany him with care) to be found co-heirs with him in the celestial regions, in his glorified state, hereafter.

I account the holy Scriptures an excellent treasure, and I wish the rising generation were concerned to know the Scriptures from their youth, which, through faith in the great and glorious object they propose, are able to make us wise unto salvation : but notwithstanding the glorious and excellent account of the holy Jesus, with regard to his being incarnate, conversing among men, and the delivery of many excellent precepts, the holy apostle mentions the sum and substance of the christian religion as an unspeakable gift, which there was no language sufficiently able to define and set forth. I have thought, notwithstanding this, it is an intelligible, though an unspeakable gift ; intelligible to the meanest capacity ; for the rest of saints, is the provision of God, for the various ranks of mankind, high and low, rich and poor : he is the God and Father of us all, who is over all, through all, and in all : and the religion of the holy Jesus, is not designed to be placed beyond the reach of vulgar capacities ; its glorious

nature not dependant on the skill of human literature to unfold ; it is easy and intelligible to the mind willing to learn it, and lies open to the sincere and upright heart, who considers it not as a scene of abstruse difficulties, mysterious matters, but as intended to regulate the affections, to rectify our natures, to guide us in wisdom, and afterwards receive us into glory.

Some people think themselves too light for religion ; these are mistaken, for it adds dignity to the greatest state, and, in it is real nobility. I have sometimes feared, some people think themselves too low for religion, as if it was the proper business of the rich, who had leisure and opportunity ; and that the poor and laborious, the exercised and distressed part of the family, were beneath religion. They are both mistaken ; for the God and Father of all, with an equal eye, beholds his family, his mighty family, the angels, the arch-angels, the triumphant hearts, and the militant hearts, who by faith and patience, are seeking to pass their time here in a conformity to their elder brethren : that, when mortality shall be swallowed up of immortality, they might join the family on high.

I confess, in this point of view, I look upon the workmanship of God, and have no more doubt of a part in the family of the Most High, whilst conversant in the vicissitudes of an earthly pilgrimage, than when this transient habitation of clay shall resolve to its original matter, and the eyes

that see me now shall see me no more : we are entering upon eternity, and an indissoluble connexion with ever and ever. In this life, God has diversified our ranks in unerring wisdom, for the great purpose of his will ; there is nothing low, in the eye of the Universal Parent, but vice, irreligion, a forgetfulness of God, and ourselves, and alienation to his nature ; this, throughout all ranks, is eternally and unalterably inconsistent with acceptance in the sight of God ; he has adapted instruction to every state and condition, in unerring wisdom. It behoves all, carefully and diligently, to seek a right improvement of this unspeakable gift, to see that it was not bestowed in vain.

We are not at all ashamed or afraid of advocating the cause of simple christianity, under the ancient definition or description of it, given by the holy Jesus, as *the leaven which the woman took and hid in three measures of meal.*—Not ashamed to define religion as designed to reform the heart, to make men pure and acceptable in the sight of God, not wearied in our endeavours to impress on the minds of men, the absolute necessity of this unspeakable gift in themselves, as religion flows from this gift ; a gift adapted to every understanding and every state, and which the same apostle, writing to his sons, after the common faith, further illustrates in a manner worthy of all our attention ; and, if regarded, would put an end to the controversies amongst christians ;—*he gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all ini-*

*quity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works.*

I own, I look upon this to be the great design of this unspeakable gift, and a compendious account of the religion of Christ; “the grace of God that brings salvation, hath appeared to all men, teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live righteously, soberly, and godly, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearance of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works.”

I can hardly think that any are so hardy as to assert there is either falsehood or inconsistency in this apostolic definition of the great design of the religion of Christ, however their lives may contradict their profession, and give the lie to their own assent to the truths of religion. Scarce any can arrive to that degree of obduracy of mind, as to deny this to be the glorious intention of the religion of Christ: here is the unspeakable gift,—*he gave himself for us*; he laid aside his glory, he came in the form of a servant, in a state of humiliation and poverty; was introduced into the world in a stable, laid in a manger, was (and not upon his own account)—*a man of sorrow and acquainted with grief*; the whole series of his life was a continued act of illustrious virtue, instructive and exemplary, to shew us the dignity of the religion

he came to establish, and to impress the minds of mankind, that they should walk as he walked. After having accomplished a pilgrimage of thirty-three years, he gave himself for us on Calvary's Mount,—*the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God—He trod the wine-press alone, and of the people there was none with him.* He that had legions of angels at command, bore the contradiction of sinners; and that sacred countenance, imprest with divine glory, was spit upon, crowned with thorns, as the most notorious malefactor; yet, *as a sheep, dumb before its shearers, he opened not his mouth.*

I cannot avoid endeavouring to impress the recollection of these awful truths upon the minds of all such as profess to call upon the name of the Father, by Jesus Christ, and hope for salvation through him; that they might accustom themselves to ruminate upon the stupendous exhibition of divine love; that they might carefully enquire how far the end is answered to them, and might apply, to their own advantage, that unspeakable gift, *he gave himself for us, was crucified, dead and buried;* but he arose again, and trampled over the powers of death, hell, and the grave, *led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men, even the rebellious;* for this great purpose, the purpose of human redemption, that he might redeem us; that through his stripes, we might know the glorious progress of redemption experimentally.

As individuals, it is worth while to consider the terms of this gift, and its intention; that it should produce necessary fruits of all worthy receivers; *he gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity.*

I have frequently feared a dangerous mistake with respect to this; have heard some express their apprehension of redemption from the penalty of sin, but not from the body of sin; though there may be an unwarrantable stress laid upon it, it is one of the most powerful calls to righteousness and holiness of life. I have met with not a few who have considered it in a different light, as a kind of toleration, for acting inconsistent with the purity of the divine nature, and an allowance for continuing in human frailty.

The mind, having lost its faith in the sufficiency of the Divine Power, has mistaken the intention of this gift, and has looked upon it as a freedom from wrath, rather than iniquity; *What, shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?* There were such in the primitive state of the church.

I have heard some, so remote from the nature of the christian religion, the power and purity attending it, as to assert, there is no possibility of redemption from the reigning power of sin in this life; that the christian redemption is unalterable, as to this—redeeming us from all iniquity, having doubted the sufficiency of the divine grace; to change effectually, from a state of corruption, and

having lost their faith in the power of God, it has been impossible for them to make a proficiency in the divine life. But we have the utmost reason to be assured, that it is *from all iniquity*—from the reigning power of transgression; that the grace of God is able to do all things for us, to change the vile body of our affections, and make it like the body of Christ; able to take away our stony hearts, and give us hearts of flesh: but this brings religion nearer home than many choose to have it; takes it from the head to the heart, lays the axe to the root of the tree, and brings home to an anticipation of the search into their own states.

This is a grand reason for rejecting the christian religion; but we must subscribe to all the truths of the gospel, or be *in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity*. But the unerring wisdom of God has been rejected, men have took themselves out of the hands of God, and gone their own way; have endeavoured, by the multiplicity of professions, and their own external performances, and every invention of the human mind in the mysteries of ungodliness, to evade this grand point, *to redeem us from all iniquity*; but there is not only the mark of the forehead, but these more hidden transgressions. There is a filthiness of spirit, that to an All-seeing Eye, is equally detestable; sacred is our Judge; there is a judgment-seat covered with mercy to a hair's-breadth; but we cannot advance one attribute, and deprecate another. Though wonderful is his mercy, yet justice, righteousness and truth, are essentials in the attributes of the

most high God. *Let me die the death of the righteous*; let me rejoice when I pass through the regions of death, is the wish of all; but they would not be brought to the test, that redemption from all iniquity, that thorough cleansing, that turning of the hand upon them, and purging away not only their dross, but their tin, and reprobate silver. There is abundance of that amongst professors, there is a self-righteousness of the law; it consists not only in action, but speculation, in splendid opinions; this opinion hath passed for faith, and cheated many to wretchedness. Opinion resembles faith so much, that the eye had need be opened to discern the difference; yet a great one there is: many have strong opinions concerning the work of religion; some have looked upon it as instantaneous, some otherwise. I confess, with respect to that instantaneous work, *I have not so learned Christ*; far be it from me to judge another man's servant, but I have not so learned Christ, as to know, that to be an instantaneous, but a gradual work. Some think there is a sudden death to sin, and a new birth to righteousness, in a moment. I have not traced the conduct of people professing the christian religion, with an uncharitable eye; but I have often observed that instantaneous work to be of a short-lived continuance; have seen some recur back again to their sins, and their latter end has been worse than the beginning. When God said, let there be light, there was light, a succession of days and nights, the beauties of creation were gradually brought forth, till man was made in God's image.

I have not been destitute of some degree of religious experience, the praise I dedicate to God, the fruits to your service. Religion has wore this aspect with me ; it has been a gradual work, a gradual advancement from faith to faith ; but when people are enriched with unfelt truths, they call a strong persuasion of mind, *faith*, when it is only opinion. Faith is promotive of redemption, the saint's victory ; this faith that works by love, subverts the strong holds of Satan, restores people to a state of acceptance with God, impressing the features of the King of Heaven upon all their actions : but this opinion, this mistaken opinion, would pass by redemption from all iniquity ; the leaven of the kingdom, would lead to a variety of actions, abundance of words and professions, and set the mind afloat above that sacred leaven, that unspeakable gift, which cannot be fully uttered. The Lord preserve us from this dangerous mistake !

I speak to a people, many of whom are, I trust, enquiring after things of the highest moment ; I wish you well on your way, that your minds might not only reverence that unspeakable gift, but trace the source, and pursue the end. He gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, that he might cleanse us from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, establish our affections on things above ; that the mind that was in Christ, might be in us. I look upon this to be the design of christianity : this unspeakable gift, the religion of Jesus, works secretly, powerfully, and effectually ; sometimes it draws to expressions, often-

times otherwise: the occasion of praise ceased not when there was silence in heaven for half an hour. May we so hide the word in our hearts, as to witness its progress there!

I have feared, the multitude of conversation has betrayed the minds of the people; been afraid of people talking away religion by frequent use, familiarizing their minds to treat the things of God, not with that feeling reverence, flowing from this unspeakable gift. Far be it from me, to enfeeble the mind bent after things of the greatest moment. I know I regret with you, the too general conversation of the world goes upon other subjects; and things appertaining to life and godliness, are rather objects of contempt and derision, than of that humble reverential awe that becometh us. This is too much the case; yet there is a possibility of talking away religion, by a multiplicity of conversation, passing beyond our own light. I would rather endeavour to know what the Holy Ghost meant by that silence in heaven for half an hour, than make religion too cheap by conversation:—Keep it in the heart: too much discourse carries off the essence of religion; keep the mind as a garden enclosed; a proper attention to this unspeakable gift, will tend more to comfort and strengthen, than where a profession of words carries away the proper sensibility of our state and condition.

I know the matter requires distinction! I want not to discourage any thing of an heavenly birth:

but fear some have been carried out of their depth, the divine Spirit of religion has been evaporated, greatly to their loss. Let not those who care for none of these things, run into discourse subversive of religion. Wisdom leads in the middle paths of judgment; and though the gift is unspeakable, yet we have a right understanding of the effects upon our own minds. We know there is a sun in the firmament, we feel its warmth, it extends its light and warmth through the globe, but the utmost intent of its nature is inexplicable; the division of its rays, the source of its heat, after what manner placed in the planetary world, or how formed; these are inexplicable, so is the Sun of Righteousness; but, though the properties of the sun be unspeakable, we know, we rejoice in its effects; we have indubitable proofs of its existence: so the unspeakable gift, the Sun of Righteousness, to enlighten men, to guide them in wisdom, to unite them to their elder Brother, to replenish their affections, and set them on things above. Though an unspeakable gift, yet intelligible, reaches to the minds of men, affects them, quickens them, raises them from death and dead works, to a contemplation of those things of infinite consequence to them.

I cannot but intreat you, of the rising generation, carefully to attend to this gift,—in its right-hand are length of days, in its left-hand are riches and honour: watch unto prayer, be not ashamed of this unspeakable gift, and its tendency.

What is the reason of the scepticism and infidelity that is amongst us? it is enough now to make one ridiculous, to revive, in the remembrance of christians, their own principles. What is the reason that youth falls a prey to the gloomy doctrines of infidelity that abound in this age? the want of attending to this unspeakable gift. Were their minds endued with a sense of its virtue, there would be no more reasoning them out of the efficacy of religion, and the existence of this unspeakable gift, than that there was no sun in the firmament. From the strongest of all convictions, that of experience, they could give in their testimony to the nature, power, and spirit of the christian religion, and their minds would be enabled to see that this is He, and we look not for another.

I beseech you, therefore, my friends, such of you as know this unspeakable gift, seek after a capacity of praising God, of ascribing thanks for this unspeakable gift: he that offers praise, glorifies God, *and to him that ordereth his conversation aright, will I shew forth my salvation.*

We have abundance of what is called public worship, sometimes many exterior acts, which amuse the minds of mankind; but vain and foolish is it to apprehend Infinity to be organized like us, and the ears of Him that filleth immensity, to be like ours!

*Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift :*

Let it appear by its own influence ; it is the living that praise him ; the glory of the workman is discovered by the beauty of the workmanship. Was the mind endued with this unspeakable gift, and all within us brought into subjection to its divine nature and tendency, there would be an incessant oblation, arising with holy efficacy to a God hearing prayer ; though silent with regard to the human ear, yet intelligible to Him.

I would recommend you, my brethren and sisters, that profess this gift, I beseech you by the mercies of God, by your hopes of standing at last accepted in the Beloved, you that have professed this gift, dwell with it, abide with it, let it have its utmost effect upon your minds. Be what you profess, lie not in the sight of God and man, or the Holy Ghost ; live by that unspeakable gift, and you will shew forth his praise that hath called you to glory. Attend to it, that it may shine more and more to the perfect day : there is not a more detestable character, than a professor of this unspeakable gift, that contradicts it in practice ; high in profession, low in practice ; flattery and smooth tales may please fools, but are inconsistent with the solemn work of the souls of men. Let the professors of this religion place themselves in a conspicuous point of view, and be what they profess, as they would be fixed amongst the stars in eternal glory, arising from their firm attachment to this unspeakable gift.

*The following Discourse was delivered at Leeds,  
the 26th of the Sixth Month, 1769.*

IT is not in the *oldness of the letter*,\* or in unfeeling formality, but from the animating warmth of gospel love, that I salute this assembly in these expressions :

*The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all always. Amen.†*

It is the constant language of that evangelical spirit, from which arises this tribute of—*Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, good-will to men,‡* and which I am thankful to feel not restrained within less compass than the bulk of mankind ; but zealously and ardently pointing towards all such as profess faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and a hope of salvation by him.

There is something farther couched in this affectionate salutation, than the language of love ; the language of wisdom.—That wisdom which is *profitable to direct,||* seems to me very evidently, and very eminently displayed, by the Father of Mercy and Kindness, in these expressions ; which,

\* Rom. vii. 6.

† 2 Cor. xiii. 14.

‡ Luke ii. 14.

|| Eccl. x. 10.

by Divine assistance, I would endeavour a little to open, and to urge as words of some signification, unto all such, whose minds are at times turned to contemplate, and not only to contemplate, but also to pursue, *the things which make for peace.*\*

### I. *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

There is no language, or form of words, sufficiently copious and expressive, though raised to the utmost extent or height of description, for representing the adorable manifestation of heavenly kindness, goodness, condescension, and mercy; or for exhibiting the things which proceed from the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ: but it is allowable to speak whereof we know, according to the measure of knowledge; and to utter according to the proportion of strength given, what we now see in part, and what from experience we feel, of the merciful kindness of God; and which, as we faithfully follow his will, we shall hereafter more fully and comprehensively behold.—This, I apprehend is necessary for all, to whom a revelation of the christian religion has been made by means of Holy Writ; and in an especial manner, where He that is the discoverer of states, has opened their understandings, to believe the doctrines of the christian religion, and the sacred records of that miraculous favour and grace that came by Jesus Christ.

\* Romans xiv. 19.

But for my own part, I must freely acknowledge, there was a time of my life, in which I would gladly have relieved myself from following the arduous paths of religion, by turning aside into the paths of scepticism and infidelity. My mind was ready to allege, as some at this time of day may be, "How can we believe without evidence? there is not a sufficient evidence of truth to convince my judgment, or to induce me to believe." I know this has been the allegation of some: but I have found there is no deficiency of evidence, but an unwillingness to admit the force of that evidence which would properly influence the mind; and I have reason to apprehend, this has been the case with others; for if there was a thorough submission, and disposition of mind to receive the truth, in the love of it; to endeavour after it in its genuine simplicity; to look at it with a single eye; and, if I may be allowed the expression, to suppress or banish all the "buts and ifs;" we should soon find the evidence of the christian religion to be lively and incontestible, and effectually to operate to make us wise and good; wise, with the wisdom that is to salvation; and good, with the goodness that is of God, the source of goodness.

But whilst people *take counsel, and not of God,* and suffer themselves to be *covered with a covering, and not of his Spirit,\** they are unwilling to admit the force of those truths which would *sepa-*

\* Isaiah xxx. 1,

*rate the precious from the vile, and purify us according to his word.*—While this is the case, that many deviate in point of faith, they may complain of the want of evidence, respecting the certainty and truth of the christian religion; and complain with as much justice, as a man who wilfully hides himself in darkness, complains of his incapacity of seeing. For we have such an evidence and understanding imparted by the light and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, as doubtless abundantly displays the immediate regard and love of God, as recorded in holy writ; and from which I freely acknowledge an internal illumination necessary, for all that would have a valid claim to the christian religion; whereby we obtain a firm assurance of, and a well-grounded belief in, those glorious truths.

We have sometimes been accused of allegorizing away the important truths of the christian religion, as recorded in holy writ: it is far, very far, from our intention or inclination! We want to enforce them upon ourselves, upon our brethren, with all that requisite weight which commands their belief; calling to a belief of heart, not a mere assent with the tongue; but *a belief of heart unto righteousness.\**

We have been distinguished, and are not ashamed of the distinction, for preaching Christ within; but we never preach a Christ within, opposed to, or derogating from, a Christ without.

\* Romans x. 10.

We fully believe, not only in his glorious and gracious appearance amongst the sons of men, *as in the volume of the book it is written* ;\* but we also believe in his inward and spiritual appearance, *the second time without sin unto salvation* ;† in which we are supported by a *cloud of witnesses* ,‡ and by the doctrine of the holy Author of the christian religion, enforcing his inward and spiritual manifestation (the manifestation of his grace) in as clear and indubitable a manner, as from the testimonies delivered concerning his external appearance.

But the mystery of ungodliness hath powerfully wrought with some who profess the christian name, in opposition to the force of those testimonies, with regard to its internal appearance, or manifestation of himself in the hearts of mankind ; and to render inadmissible the doctrine of an inward and spiritual communion, the revelation of light, life, and good to the souls of men, immediately imparted for our redemption and sanctification.—This would lead people home from the flowery path of ease and speculation, into the arduous one of practice : it would transfer religion from the head to the heart : and, in its progress, would remove every obstacle to the admission of the doctrine of an inward and spiritual manifestation of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Heb. x. 7.

† Ibid ix. 28.

‡ Ibid xii. 1

But there hath been a lamentable defection from the life and spirit of true christianity, wherein the old man, under all the pomp of opinion, and assenting to indubitable truths, still remains in full possession of every inordinate love, and his goods are at ease. A mind disguised with Jacob's voice, and Esau's hands, sound orthodox principles, with a schismatic heart, engross the formalist of all names and distinctions to religion; the old man being at ease with his goods, in a state of self-sufficiency, either rejoicing under a form, and the false shade of opinion and regularity of conduct, or in the pomp of a specious external appearance; wherein some continue possessed of an happy tranquility or ease of mind, and are endeavouring to build up a tabernacle quiet and safe, content with a form, or depending upon a bare belief in the doctrines of the christian religion.—But there is a work, whereby the old earth and the old heavens are made to shake, and must be removed; which is of the adorable mercy and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, when he thus may reveal himself;—

*Yet once more will I shake not the earth only, but also heaven\**—Not only the earth, not only against the inhabitants of the earth; but the work of God is made conspicuous in the awakening of the ungodly, for their conversion from sin and death, unto righteousness and life—*Yet once more will I shake heaven.*—The glorious specious appearance of truth, and doctrines recorded and

\* Hebrews xii. 27.

assented to, but yet not reduced to experience; truths received and confessed by the tongue, but the heart revolting from their efficacious influence.

*Yet once more will I shake not the earth only, but also heaven.*—And this word, *yet once more*, signifies the removing of those things which are shaken. And undoubtedly the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, in its manifestation, procedure, and effects, would shake every false rest in which any deluded soul may have fixed its repose. He would shake every false rest among those under all names and distinctions to religion, who are trusting in name and in form, without the power, or an experience of its virtual effects upon the soul; these all appertain to one family:—and not only so, but he will shake every false rest, yea, and the foundation, of those who are building upon a profession, and upon the apostle's testimony of Jesus Christ; because they are only building upon the credibility of those truths, yet cannot experimentally say, through the grace of our Lord Jesus,—*We acknowledge truth, according to godliness.\**

They that are of the world, come here also to a house fortified with opinion, and are supporting themselves in having obtained a clear, full, and concise knowledge of the truth of the christian religion. But there is a power that will search every

false foundation, and overturn every superficial dependance on human production, that is inconsistent with the uniform tendency of his sacred law, fashioned upon the plan of unchangeable, everlasting wisdom.—It is not of man, or by man, but proceeds from the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, whereby those truths are brought home to the hearts of mankind. The gracious effects of his powerful working, are manifested, to bring us home from a state of false dependance, that we may humbly and experimentally acknowledge, *In God is my salvation, and my glory, the rock of my strength.\* in God alone is my trust.*

But the strong man, armed with opinion and belief, has nevertheless been pursuing vitiated affections: which people have endeavoured to retain, and glossed over with a specious lofty profession, fully assenting to the truths handed forth from the experience of others, but unreduced to practice in themselves.

*While the strong man armed keeps the palace, the things that he possesseth are in peace;† until a stronger than he overcome, and cast him out with all his goods.*—All those things that are inconsistent with the holiness and purity of the divine nature, which are pointed clearly out, and may be understood, by the declaration of our Lord, concerning the church, wherein *every plant that is not of my heavenly Father's right-hand planting, shall*

\* Psalm lxii. 7

† Luke xi. 21.

*be rooted out.\**—What would then become of all those things, which a mistaken judgment calls *but little things*? Of the pleasures and amusements of the present age, invented by the sons of dissipation, who add wings to their moments, and are carried forward with rapidity through time, unprepared, to a final judgment! What a multiplicity of those things which are *not of the Father, but of the world, that lies in wickedness!*† things of which I shall not now particularly speak; but they are such as have no life in the LIFE of the Lord Jesus Christ in man, but are ever enemies to it, while the affections are earthly, and confined to this world, however the partiality of deluded minds may think to seek a resource, and attempt to obviate the seeming rigours of the gospel, or find for themselves an easier and more flexible way, by resting upon a mere belief of SYSTEMS, (the goods belonging to the strong man armed,) wherein they endeavour to support themselves, and are high in profession, but weak respecting practice! A species of deviation from the power of truth, proceeding from the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, which would search the secret of every heart! It would open to the view of the attentive mind, their nature, and the situation they are in; what is of God, and what is not of God: what is pure, and what is impure: it would ever prove a more decisive test in all our actions, a more certain criterion in our conduct through life, than, it is to be feared, the generality of christian

\* Math. xv. 13.

† 1 John v. 19.

professors have attained, and which it is absolutely impossible for the strong man armed to produce, with all his seeming sanctity of the flesh, or strenuous support of belief, and a multitude of external performances; notwithstanding he may endeavour to plead for the law and the commandment, and think thereby to attain the mark of Christ's followers, who walk therein all the days of their lives.

But, although they are thus lifted up in their minds, there is an omniscient and omnipresent Being, who cannot be deceived or imposed upon; and it is impossible to invalidate that invariable obligation to live under the power of the cross of Christ, however they may endeavour to find means, by professing his Name, without taking up a cross, to the inordinate pleasures and pursuits of this world, or attribute to themselves the merits of his death, without a death unto sin, and a new-birth unto righteousness, wherein alone we are made partakers of an everlasting glory.

I beseech you, by the most powerful motive of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that every one may endeavour to cultivate in your minds a living sense of religion; and that we may all experience the purity and sanctity of its nature to operate in our hearts; and, as members of one family, though distinguished by various names, we may continue as brethren and fellow-pilgrims, in our passage through the wilderness of this world, to an endless glory; that we may run with

patience the arduous race, although through distress of temptation and probation, to an inheritance *incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away.*

I beseech you, by the mercies of God, by every powerful motive, in the language of love, the love of God, which lives in my heart, lay hold of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which alone our hearts and minds can experimentally acknowledge, that it is by the virtue of it we are cleansed, purified, and redeemed from the pollutions and defilements of the world; and whereby we become fashioned in the image of righteousness and true holiness.

Let us next consider the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, as offered for our redemption. And I have no doubt of its being acknowledged, by all who have any understanding of true Christianity, or care about their immortal souls, that the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ manifestly leads to the doctrine of *repentance from dead works, and of faith towards God*; to a redemption of the soul from death, hell, and the grave; consequently, from that state of punishment due to sinners, where the ungodly receive the reward of their disobedience:—neither have I any doubt of our being accompanied herein by a cloud of witnesses, who FEEL the truth of the christian religion, and know the force and authority of those testimonies concerning it.—And let us take along with us the knowledge which the apostles and primitive be-

lievers had of the christian redemption and doctrine in their times, that the “grace of God, that brings salvation, hath appeared to ALL men; teaching us, that denying ungodliness, and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and glorious appearance, of the grace of God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”\* This is the redemption proposed by the gospel, which commands our assent, and will remain obligatory throughout all ages of the christian dispensation.

But there has been a claim to redemption, introduced in the apostacy from the life of religion, maintained amongst professors under various names, who plead the impossibility of being redeemed from the power of sin;—a redemption from the penalty, but not from the commission; a redemption from the punishment, without a victory over the transgressing nature:—and herein the mystery of unrighteousness hath powerfully wrought, and still works, thus to substitute names for things, sounds instead of substance, and a profession, instead of a lively possession of its powerful and virtual effects upon the mind.—But it is a redemption from *all iniquity*, whereby alone he will *purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works*.

*Thou shalt call his name JESUS, for he shall save his people from their sins.\** From the worldly nature, and from the corruptions and defilements of the world.—A redemption from the power of sin ;—wherein we are sanctified, and justified, in the sight of God, and are prepared for an admission into the kingdom of heaven, as we are possessed of this efficacious redemption :—*It is like unto a little leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal.†*—It was operative ; and being diffused through the three measures of meal, there was a real, inherent change, or partaking of its own nature ;—a change effected by the powerful diffusion of that leavening virtue.

This is the redemption of Jesus Christ ;---a redemption effected by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. It consists not in the strength, or change of opinions, or a formal conception ;---but as we experience a gradual progression from glory to glory, and from one degree of similitude, or resemblance of the Divine Image, to another, until we obtain a victory here, and the consummation of happiness in a future state.

I apprehend this is the genuine nature of christian redemption, as proposed by the gospel, which will stand the test, and bring forth the glorious fruits of *Righteousness, Peace and Joy in the Holy Ghost* ; and wherein he will refine, and *purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works,*

\* Matt. i. 21.

† Matt. xiii, 33.

We are not to ascribe, or attribute to ourselves any merit of works, as performed in the strength of a natural understanding, or from any religious attainments; but ever to retain a consciousness of our inability; as knowing nothing belongs to us as creatures, but *blushing and confusion of face*;\* and that our growth towards perfection proceeds from the assistance dispensed of his unbounded mercy and grace; as saith the apostle, *It is by the grace of God I am what I am; and his grace which is in me, was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all; yet not I, but the grace of God which is in me.*†

I have no doubt that many of your minds, under various names and distinctions to religion, have been at times touched with a feeling sense of the nature and excellency of true christianity; with a blessed sense of it, proceeding from the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.—May you so follow on, as to experience a farther progress in its efficacious operation upon your minds, and witness its leavening virtue into its own nature, drawing you from the temper and defilements of the world, by a transformation of your minds from dead works, to serve the living God!—wherein you would truly experience an increase in strength, derived from Him to whom *all power is given*;‡ power to effect every excellent purpose, and to fill up to you all those relative attributes which are inseparable from the divine nature; and wherein He is

\* Dan. ix. 7.

† 1 Cor. xv. 10.

‡ Matt. xxviii. 18.

mercifully communicating an holy evidence of faith, in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ; a faith in *things not seen, the substance of things hoped for.\**

May we be engaged in an humble dependance, and awful worship, before the God of heaven and earth! continually contemplate him in his adorable perfections, as the Father and Fountain of all our mercies; and faithfully regard every part of our duty, in bringing *glory to God*, proposed as the mark of our redemption and reconciliation, through the merits and mediation of a crucified Saviour; *who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.*— In this manner, we become members of his sacred militant church on earth; and are entering upon the path to the triumphant church in heaven.

We were made a little lower than the angels, and intended to partake in the fruition of happiness with the spirits of just men made perfect, in the general assembly of the first-born sons of God. And I have no doubt but he will still beautify his foot-stool by the gift of his grace, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, proceeding from himself, the Author and Fountain of Good, and of every perfect work, whereunto we are called by his Spirit, and become united in membership with his sancti-

\* Hebrews xi. 1.

fied church and family :—So that, having filled up the measure of our days in the world, we may finally receive the beatific reward of an endless life, with the just of all generations.

I have no doubt of the possibility of access to the Father, while cloathed with mortality, through the mediation and intercession of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.—But it is, as we admit his Spirit to operate in our minds, to prepare us for access, and duly attend to the assistance afforded us.

*May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, be with you all, always!*

May you be built up in his grace, and continue engaged in the contemplation of his adorable perfections! the infinite kindness and goodness of God! the excellency and purity of the christian nature! and, by a separation from the world, obtain a well-grounded hope *that he may be with you all, always. Amen.*

Yet, notwithstanding an happy advancement may be known, a state of humble watchfulness is our duty, and our safety. I cannot join with the opinion of those, who maintain the doctrine of once in grace, ever in grace.—I believe that it is possible for those who have been visited with a measure and manifestation of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that have *tasted the good word of*

*life, and of the powers of the world to come,\* to fall away. It is necessary to continue in a state of daily dependance on divine strength, for our faithful perseverance in the uniform progressive labour of a christian life, and a daily walking with the God of our lives, to preserve us from evil. The apostle, who seemed to entertain a requisite diffidence with regard to himself, perceived the necessity of a continuance in the communion of grace, in order to a happy conclusion: and was cautious, while he was preaching to others, lest himself should become a cast-away.†—Let us, therefore, not content ourselves that we begin and run well for a season; but retain upon our minds a living sense of religion, cloathed with native simplicity and purity, proceeding from the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

## II. *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ; the love of God.*

He hath so loved us, and manifested his inconceivable favour towards us, that he hath not dealt with us according to our merits, but of his free and unmerited grace, that we might become heirs of an endless inheritance in glory! *God so loved the world, that he sent his own Son into the world, to be a light to the world; a light to enlighten the gentiles, and to be his salvation to the ends of the earth.‡* It is this heavenly love, the love of God, that is the grand and solemn cement of his family,

\* Heb. vi. 5.

† 1 Cor. ix. 27.

‡ Acts xiii. 47.

both here and hereafter : wherein we are united to him, and in fellowship one with another. It binds all into an uniform consistency, both in heaven and earth. Many other objects of our love are local and temporary, limited to time and place, or confined to this world, and to the things that are in it : but the love of God is an endless commandment.—It is charity, that divine charity, that will remain when testimonies shall cease, and declarations come to an end ;—in a participation whereof, we shall still continue to join in holy worship and adoration unto God, the author of our being !

It is in the enjoyment of this divine and ardent charity, that the celestial inhabitants in the realms of light, receive the sacred emanations of love, and enjoy the favour of God, in a participation of those ineffable pleasures, which it yields to the glorified assembly of saints in bliss. And, indeed, it seems to me to be the grand source of all happiness and duty ; happiness in heaven, as well as perfection of wisdom to the sons of men, derived from those gracious relative attributes of the divinity wherein he is mercifully communicating the essential part of his own nature, being, in himself, *altogether lovely*,\* consummate in the perfection of holiness, and unparalleled in wisdom ! wherein we are sometimes favoured with the fruition of his love, measureably imparted, to our comfort and unspeakable joy, infinitely superior to all that this world

\* Canticles v. 16.

can afford, and which will remain, “when the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up!”\*—The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, will then open unto the soul, that glorious prospect of unutterable, inconceivable happiness, which is the provision of God for the righteous, and those who faithfully persevere to a peaceful and happy conclusion !

It is by virtue of the grace and love of God, that we are enabled to advance in a proper progression through the various steps of a religious life : and which would kindle an ardour of affection in the mind, with desires for a continued supply of that heavenly virtue, which nourishes the soul up unto eternal life. A want of this, makes us bow to the god of this world, and to things that are in it.---The love of money, riches, and the praise of men ; which, with various powers of seduction, are presented to our view, and our prospects are bounded by the narrow conceptions of an earthly mind.—It is a love of those things, which obstructs the progress of religion.—A secret deviation from the love of God, to a love of this world, has prevailed in many.—But how can it be otherwise, since like will ever assimilate with its like ? And while the body is terrestrial, the glory is terrestrial, and the body will continue engaged in the pursuit of earthly things. For every mind will attend to its similitude.---And

\* 2 Peter iii. 10.

while the body is terrestrial, the glory will remain terrestrial, however it may assume to matters of a higher nature, and superior importance.---Yet, while the glory is earthly, our views earthly, and confined to the pleasures and pursuits of this world, our affections are earthly, and we are rendered incapable of that love, which is of a divine and heavenly nature.

A terrestrial love presides, and is prevalent in the minds of many; which has obstructed the power of truth, and been the cause of feeble purposes and feeble efforts, enfeebled minds with irresolute intentions, and proved the occasion of a defection amongst christian professors, who have been desirous to form something more amiable and agreeable, or better adapted to their natural inclinations---But there is a deficiency in their love, a wavering in affection, a division of love, which is the cause of weakness and incapacity, to make a proper advancement in a christian life, or improvement in the progressive work of religion upon the soul. For, as I have hinted, while the body is terrestrial, the glory is terrestrial, until we are created anew in Christ Jesus, unto righteousness; wherein our minds will become cloathed with a celestial glory, and by the power of divine grace, be set above every earthly love: and then the love of God will prevail in our minds, and we shall attain an experience of additional strength, steadily to persevere in the arduous warfare of a christian life. And the glory being celestial, our views are circumscribed within the limits of an

heavenly love, wherein we are lifted up to God, being renewed in the spirit of our minds, and enabled to travel on towards the glorious city of the saints' solemnity !

But it is a deficiency of love, it is a cleaving to other things, inconsistent with the purity of the divine nature, that has slain ten thousands !—A secret defection of heart, which no human eye hath been privy to, has slain more than open prophanity !—A degeneracy of heart, a secret sliding from the covenant of life, in those who are turning aside into the path of irreligion, and a mental deviation from the purity of nature, and holiness ; the the necessary requisite to an union and divine participation in the love of God.

I think it is said, with very great propriety, that *The love of money is the root of all evil ; which, while some have lusted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.\** But, though it may seem to many not needful to tell of these things, methinks it is applicable to some in these days, who would be deemed *men of God* ; and for whom I wish, as for myself, that when the heavens shall roll back as a scroll, and eternity shall open upon us ; when our views of these lower objects shall vanish and disappear ; when the arch-angel's trump shall sound to judgment, and a righteous retribution is made, we may be found men of God !---But, O,

\* 1 Timothy vi. 10.

man of God ! that hast these things in view, think on the unutterable prospect of infinite happiness, the reward of obedience, and flee these things ! Flee the glory and splendour of this transient world ; continue to follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness ; fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.

This is the language of the love of God to this assembly, that we may be *found men of God*, when all the glory of this world, with its splendour and dependancies, shall come to a conclusion ; that when every human aid shall vanish, and no worldly assistance is near, the love of God may cover our spirits in all our trials ; that when every human help is totally suspended, we may continue to feel the effects of his mercy and goodness happily to spread in our minds, to their edification and unspeakable joy.---Herein we receive a divine evidence of love, communicated from that boundless source of unutterable grace, wherewith he has visited us, in order to dwell in our hearts, or that he may dwell in us richly.---And thus we are brought to discern the beauty of holiness, the uniformity of love, to open the mind beyond the contracted view of human powers, into the glorious fruition of divine essential love, the love of God, that would thus dwell in our hearts and minds ! and then we may witness Him to be *with us all, always. Amen.* He will be a light to our paths, and an aid at hand, while we are travelling

through the various difficulties and probations in life.—May the Shepherd of Israel, *who sleeps not by day, nor slumbers by night*, attend you ! and may we place our whole dependance upon him, as our support and all-sufficient strength, in every needful time !

And, dearly-beloved youth ! you that are entering upon the stage of active life, be ever vigilantly concerned to improve the present moments, and that you may build beyond the habitation of sorrow : that all the high places may be removed, and your minds become replenished with true consolation.—And as you are not always to expect one uniform joyous scene, but clouds of darkness sometimes interrupt the prospects of pleasure, in your pilgrimage through life, prepare your minds, by zealously endeavouring after the love of God ; and wait to know, in yourselves, the unspeakable advantage of his heavenly aid and assistance, offered to conduct you through the various scenes of mortality, to the righteous and awful presence of the Judge of heaven and earth ; which will continue to sustain you, when no human consolation can afford relief ; even when your offences appear as a flood, surrounded with temptation and distress, and you are ready to cry out, “ who shall deliver me from the wrath of an offended Creator ! ” In this state of anxious solicitude, your heavenly Father is mercifully pleased to arise, and administer relief to such, who are thus *hungering and thirsting after righteousness* ; and the cup of life and salvation is handed to their comfort, from the

glorious Helper, that in his strength, you may be enabled to stand unshaken in the troublesome time !—And it is to these he waits to be gracious ; a Helper at hand, from whom proceeds every power to assist, and every attribute of mercy, kindness, goodness, and adorable condescension, are graciously dispensed to the sons of men, wherein they are established in righteousness and true holiness.

*He touches the mountains, and they melt :* every obstruction that would hinder the progress or advancement of this divine, essential, efficacious work of redemption upon the soul, must be removed : every unavailing connexion must give place to the ties of an ardent and sanctified love.

*He touches the mountains, and they melt ; the everlasting hills, they bow at his presence.* In his mercy we experience the removing of those things that oppose or prevent an increase in the knowledge of God, or of the things appertaining to our everlasting peace : in order that the exercised pilgrim, in his progress, may receive additional strength, to run with alacrity the race of a christian life, and finally attain an happy union with the sons of the morning, who sing together for joy.

It is the glorious benefits proceeding from the love of God, which I earnestly entreat that the youth, of all names and distinctions to religion, may carefully seek, and avail yourselves of, that

He may be with you through the various steps of a probationary life. And though you may sometimes have to travel in the exercised path of temptation and anxious distress, continue in hope, and you will feel his light to arise in your hearts, and witness an inward resurrection unto life; that life that will never fade, but will remain when every tender and lawful connexion can no longer comfort, but must soon be dissolved, and the sympathy one for another, shall be ineffectual to deliver. All the tender connexions in life are but of uncertain duration, and upon them all, this inscription is wrote,---*They shall shortly perish*; but the love of God never fades: it is continued from generation to generation, and will remain when time shall be swallowed up in eternity.---It is this wherein we taste of the goodness of God, and are made to drink the cup of life and salvation, and have to rejoice in the unspeakable fruition of happiness it affords to the sanctified in heart, who, in future time, as well as the present, will have to say, *Spring up, O well, and we will sing unto thee!* It will remain an enduring portion to the ransomed in Jacob, and to the redeemed in Israel; and will be an excellent comforter in the time of probation and exercise, through the silent steps of anxiety and secret distress, known to none but God and thy own soul.

He knows all things, by whose merciful aid we are sustained through *the regions of the shadow of death*, when every unavailing relation or human dependency shall disappear and come to an end.

What then, shall sustain us, but the love of God? It is that which covers the head in the day of battle; and which I would recommend, with a fervent affection, to you who are the hopes of the present age, that you ardently endeavour after the love of God, that will never decrease with age; it enlarges upon the mind, and is increased with an increase of love: it proceeds from the throne of God, and spreads from the threshold of his house: it is continued through the courts of his sanctuary, and reaches to the uttermost part of the earth; and is as a river, *the streams whereof make glad the whole heritage of God.*

All the beauty and splendour of the world will fade; and the excellency of temporal enjoyments, which are the portion of uncertainty, shall shortly know their time and place no more; but the love of God, flowing from himself, returns upon the sanctified soul, as a river that never passeth by, proceeding from the inexhaustible source of love; it spreads through the various states of mankind, and is diffused throughout the spiritual creation of his Son, unlimited as eternity! A degree of which I feel upon my mind for this assembly, with an ardency that cannot be expressed, that He may be with you all, always. Amen!—For the love of God, imparted to the sanctified soul, and a portion of the Holy Ghost, and divine approbation in communion, hath been such, as “eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive the good things that God hath in store for them that love him.

### III. *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost.*

This is the bond that binds, and wherein we are united to God, and know it to be a well, springing up unto eternal life. It is not in external helps, nor in the agreement of words, neither is it in the consent of doctrine, or in the fine-spun regular systems, to constitute a *communion of the Holy Ghost*. But it is as we are admitted to a sacred repast in the divine banqueting-house, (wherein we offer the oblation of worship, a cloud of incense, arising from hearts prepared by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in the love of God,) that we are advanced to a divine communion of the Holy Ghost. A communion not restrained to any distinction or profession of people, but extended to all such as experience an union and fellowship in spirit, wherein they are sometimes lifted up to the Father of Spirits, and enabled to approach him *in spirit and in truth*: which has often been sealed with the love and approbation of God, in a divine manifestation of his kindness and goodness to men, *who eat that which is good, and delight themselves in fatness*, being renewed in the spirit of their minds, and enabled to lay hold on eternal life.

In this communion, this unutterable, this inconceivable communion, many have found their *strength to be renewed*, and their hearts to be engaged in the solemn worship of God, the author

of their being : a communion, inexpressible in its nature !

May those minds, which have attained this happy experience, continue therein, in all humility and purity !

It is a communion in spirit, wherein the sanctified soul approaches the Author of Spirits with a sacrifice in spirit, when the sacrifice of words shall fail. For there is a communion which language cannot express ! a worship that wants not the aid of words, nor is to be defined by an harmony of sounds, in which we approach the sacred Author of unutterable Love !

When there was *silence in heaven for about the space of half an hour* ; when the vocal tribute of *holy, holy, holy*, and the hallelujahs of sanctified spirits in endless felicity were suspended, their worship continued in awful, holy, solemn, inconceivable SILENCE ! it was rapturous adoration, too copious for language to express ! a cloud of incense, before the throne of Immaculate Purity and Love !

May our minds be gathered to it, let our name and profession to religion be what it may ! and may we experience this divine communion of saints, and deeply ponder God's unbounded love, in solemn silence ! For there is no power of eloquence can sufficiently acknowledge the obligation and reverence we owe His infinite Majesty, who

fills heaven and earth with his glory and goodness! But let us look up unto Him, and wait to be prepared for it; for *they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength*; wherein we may experience a constant advancement from grace to grace, until we attain the glorious end proposed by this lively animating salutation (which I wish for you as for myself.)—*The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all, always. Amen.*

*A Prayer after the foregoing Discourse.*

THOU that searchest the heart, and knowest what is therein, most glorious Being! with reverence, and praise, we acknowledge thine infinite love; and with humility and awful worship, we commemorate the gracious continuance of thy favour; of which, in their respective services, the minds of thy children and people, in the contemplation of thy goodness, are engaged to render the praise to Thee alone.

In an humbling sense of thy continued regard, whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain, we prostrate our souls before thee! Although encompassed with the cherubim and seraphim, and infinitely exalted above all blessing and praise, yet dost thou extend thy providential care and assistance towards the meanest of thy family. We are engaged at this season, to entreat thy continued care, that Zion may arise, and lift up her head to thee. In thine abundant regard, and tender compassion, thou art sustaining the poor and needy; and, with the glorious manifestations of thy love, art supporting the sick and sorrowful soul. Although centered in the eternal tribute of holy, holy, holy! and the hallelujahs of glorified spirits, yet

thou art with the humble contrite mind, even in the habitations of sorrow and distress. To these, as well as to the glorious inhabitants of thy celestial kingdom, the fountain of life and salvation is opened and revealed, that the sons of men may see, and be enabled to rejoice in thy glory ! In an humble reverent sense of thy greatness, goodness and mercy, we are encouraged to approach thee, and to bless thy great and excellent Name !

We acknowledge thy kindness, and adorable condescension, in thus supplying the various wants and necessities of thy people, who, under a grateful sense of thy unspeakable love, are engaged in the language of this solemn enquiry, What shall I render unto thee ; or, wherewith shall I approach thee, O, Lord of heaven and earth !

We pray thee, in the Name and in the Spirit of thy dear Son, that an awful, humbling sense of thy goodness may spread over this assembly. Turn the minds of the multitude to thyself ; and unite them in the fellowship and communion of saints. Thus, glorious Father ! collect the attention of souls to thyself ; that, for thy mercies past, in the fruition of the present, and in the lively anticipation of their continuance through the succeeding steps of our lives, a cloud of incense may ascend with acceptance before thee, in the grateful oblation of thanksgiving and praise !

And, O Lord God ! thou who inhabitest the praises of eternity, and dwellest in the light, grant

thy holy assistance, and prepare, we beseech thee, the minds of innumerable multitudes to receive thy truth : that thy church and kingdom may extend from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth !

Suffer not any to forget the time of looking upon Thee, or to depart from their everlasting interest, by following after lying vanities. Continue, we pray thee, in thy mercy and goodness, the renewed visitation of thy love to the youth ! They have been impressed with an holy sense of thine infinite regard : they have acknowledged thy goodness, and the glory of thy power ; and yet they have too much turned aside from following thee.

Turn thine hand upon these, O Lord ! enter into judgment with them ; allure them into the wilderness, and give them vineyards from thence. Assert thy own right to their obedience, that they may happily be engaged to give up their minds to follow thee. Enable them to discharge their respective duties acceptably before thee ; that through the redemption of thy power, they may become sanctified vessels, with the sacred inscription of holiness upon them. Be near to them in poverty ; enrich them with the gifts and graces of thy Holy Spirit, and be their safe hiding-place in the day of adversity. Extend, we humbly beseech thee, thy compassionate care to the very dust of Zion, that with unshaken confidence, fixed on the sav-

ing Arm of thy power, we may steadily follow on in the way that leads to thy glorious kingdom !

When overtaken with anxiety and distress, and the waves of adversity pass over their heads, lift up, O Lord, the light of thy countenance upon them ! hide them, as under the shadow of thy wings, from the devourer ; that the dust of Zion may yet arise, and shine forth in the beautiful garments of salvation and praise : that they may increase in the stability of wisdom, and knowledge ; run with patience the race that is set before them, and persevere to a peaceful and happy conclusion in thy favour. Reach, we pray thee, the various states and conditions of those who are clad in the vestments of self-righteousness ; involved in the mazes of vain opinions, or centered in empty and unprofitable forms.

Arise in the ministration of thy grace, which is a ministration of power, and shake all that can be shaken ; in order that thy holy, eternal, unchangeable truth in Christ Jesus, may more and more spread and prevail in the earth ; that the souls of many thousands may be gathered to thee, and know an entrance into everlasting life.

Thus, gracious Father, whose goodness is infinite, and whose power is endless, bless the people, we pray thee. Diffuse with increasing lustre the glories of thy name. Beautify the place of thy

feet; that the innumerable multitudes which thou hast formed may, with the voice of thanksgiving, look up to thee, *our Father who art in heaven!* and in the sensible experience of thy mercy and truth, may hallow thy great and excellent Name in newness of life; and acknowledge that *thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.*

*A Discourse delivered at York, the 30th day of  
the Sixth Month, 1769.*

WHEN that great and eminent instrument, the\* apostle of our Lord Jesus Christ, had successfully laboured in planting the christian churches, he left a caution to those amongst whom he had laboured, which retains its force and validity throughout all the ages of the militant church; amongst all people of all names, but in a particular manner, to those who profess the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and a hope of salvation by him. *Be not deceived*, (he proceeds further to evince the necessity of this caution) *God is not mocked! such as every man sows, such shall he reap: if he sow to the flesh, of the flesh he shall reap corruption; but if he sow to the spirit, of the spirit he shall reap life everlasting.*†

I have no sort of doubt of this caution being from divine inspiration, recorded as a lasting watchword to all that would run so as to obtain, and persevere without fainting, to a peaceful and happy conclusion; and I apprehend it is not either unseasonable, or out of the line of my present duty, to renew the caution to each individual within

\* The apostle Paul.

† Gal. vi. 7, 8.

the audience of my voice ; inasmuch as he that betrays and deceives, is now ranked under the character of a *liar and murderer from the beginning*,\* exercising those destructive offices upon the unguarded, unwatchful, and deceived mind : for even where the fountain of light and understanding hath been opened to a discovery of those things essentially necessary to salvation, there he hath not been wanting to present himself, amongst those sons of God,† the immediate production of his enlightening and enlivening power. Satan also has endeavoured to introduce the powers of darkness, and his endeavours remain too successful. He exercises every power of deception in various respects, according to the various states and conditions of minds, and prevails with many to become like the Felixes and the Gallios, who defer repentance to a convenient season,‡ and that care for none of these things,|| to shut up their minds against religion and religious impressions ; and to bring them more and more into the list of those fools who make a mock of sin,§ and are offending the God that made them ; who live in this world without the fear of God before their eyes,¶ or a reverence towards him : and these he endeavours to fortify in the paths of skepticism and infidelity ; and to bring them under the influence of corruption.

He has suggested, and been too successful in the suggestion, that there is no superior power to

\* John viii. 44.      † Job 1. 6.      ‡ Acts xxiv. 25.

§ Acts xviii. 17.      ¶ Prov. xiv. 9.      ¶ Psalm xxxvi. 1.

whom we are accountable, adapted to the desires of some who would gladly have him divested of those attributes which are painful to their view; and here the enemy has been too much suffered to prevail with some unhappy minds, to depart from the joyous, lightsome, pleasant and delightful paths of true christianity and godliness, into the devious paths of error and deception: and to be sustained in that unhappy state, I confess appears to me, a compendium of misery without hope, and without God in the world; but as it is productive of present ease, they have lost sight of future happiness; as it proposes immediate gratification, and presents the flowery paths of pleasure, it has many votaries, and been adopted by numbers of poor deceived mortals, who endeavour to confine their prospects to present things, without looking towards that of futurity, and the boundless abyss of eternity which awaits them!

I would gladly hope there are not many, if there are any, of the number (within the audience of my voice) of those fools, who have said in their heart, *There is no God*; that have so far suffered themselves to be drawn into the power of deception, as to say or think, or even imagine, that there is no first moving cause, no rest for their feet, nor God, the Lord of all the world; but it is evidently the production of a delusive spirit, who attempts to insinuate a disbelief in the reality of a divine existence. All creation proclaims a God, and presents such a testimony to man, as renders it impossible to hesitate in point of belief,

that such a Being exists, whose power and goodness is eminently displayed throughout the whole extent of his creation; and notwithstanding this acknowledgment, there is a necessity to caution some not to be deceived, who though they own a superintendency, and care over the works of God in the external creation, yet, such is their gross infatuation, as to deny that certain providential regard and care over the far nobler part of the visible creation, his creature man. They proceed even so far as to acknowledge the circulation of the seasons, the productions of the earth, with a variety of external parts of created nature, to proceed from the fixed appointment of infinite wisdom, and are supported by an Almighty Hand; but yet are unwilling to admit the certainty of his immediate providence, care, and regard towards that constituent part, the human creation; which is of infinitely greater importance than those tabernacles of clay, which are but for a season, and in the course of nature cease to exist. This has been one of the effects of gross deception, imposed upon the understandings of mankind, and which an unwearied enemy has from age to age endeavoured to propagate upon the earth, thereby to withdraw the soul from the source of true happiness, wherein it might be enabled to resist every evil instigation, which may be laid to ensnare the unguarded mind.

There are some, who, though they acknowledge the glory of his providence, propounded and proclaimed in the external manifestations of

his greatness and goodness, but yet are not sufficiently convinced, not sufficiently apprised, or willing to admit the grace of God, or his divine and powerful word, as necessary to influence their conduct, and preside over the will of man in its spiritual race towards everlasting glory. They are ready to applaud the sufficiency of human reason, the faculties of reason and rational powers, which Infinite Wisdom has seen meet to give us for government and direction, with regard to things simply pertaining to the moral rectitude of our conduct in the common concerns of this life, and where divine Bounty has seen necessary, for the promotion of his own glory, and the happiness of his creatures, to provide a further assistance in the exercise of those faculties and reasoning powers, which the Creator of mankind sees meet in mercy to favour us with for our advancement; and by which alone we are made capable of an admission into the kingdom of God.

*Be not deceived.*

But there has been a loss sustained by all people, of all names and distinctions, to religion, who have endeavoured to intrench themselves within an imaginary security, within the bounds of natural powers and natural religion, and the exercise of those reasoning faculties of their own minds: there has been reason fixed with the commandments; and, the laws of nature maintained as a sufficient guide in our religious duties.

It is a partial leaning to our own understandings, thus to advocate our own cause from the reasoning faculties of the human mind, unassisted by that enlivening efficacious principle of light and truth, derived from the grace and love of God, which is of a higher nature, and of far greater excellence than all the powers of reason; and would open upon the view of the attentive mind, those divine essential truths, which it is impossible for the abstracted rational faculties to penetrate into. It is by the light of grace, we discover the necessity, the absolute necessity, of a daily communion with the God of our lives, a walking in holiness and purity, in self-denial, that we take up the cross of Christ, and follow him in the regeneration.\*

*Be ye holy, for I the Lord your God am holy,* has been the language of that unchangeable eternal God, by virtue of which alone we are capable of laying up a good foundation against the time to come, by laying hold on those durable riches, the provision of God for the faithful, far beyond every temporal acquisition, whereby we are admitted to that within the veil, being redeemed from all corrupt inclinations and undue affections, withdrawn from the world, and engaged to concur in that invariable proclamation evidenced in every heart, in every mind, and in the thought of all, the absolute necessity of holiness, without which, no man can see the Lord to his comfort: it has called sons from far and daughters from the ends of the earth,

\* Matt. xix. 28.

from under the power of deception, to discern the necessity of thus coming out of the arms of self-love, self-will, the partial approbation of deluded minds, whence many have been led into a persuasion of the sufficiency of human reason; they would have more liberty than the straight gate and narrow way will admit of; in this, *have me excused*, has been the frequent language of many, and a cause of departing from the consecrated paths of holiness, and whereby many have deviated from a circumscribed walking in the paths which lead to the beautiful realms of light, and to an inheritance with the family of God, whose infinite and unbounded love is diffused throughout every part of his triumphant church; and extended to his militant on earth, for he would still beautify the place of his sanctuary, within the glorious realms of everlasting day, *the habitation of his holiness, and the city where his honour dwells.*

*Be not deceived.*

Let not the minds of any professing the christian name, be deceived by the partial representation of natural affection and natural choice, a love of ease, or the pleasing prospects of temporal enjoyments; for that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and is terrestrial, there is a glory terrestrial, and a celestial glory, but the terrestrial glory is apt to withdraw the incautious mind into a visionary dependance upon earthly, and uncertain happiness; which deprives of a portion in the glory celestial. And there is made, in the provision of God, an

ample sufficiency for us completely to attain a right in the spiritual creation of his Son on this side eternity; and by which we now can say, *The Lord is with me*, because he is at my right-hand, therefore I shall not be moved.

It is the sufficiency we receive from his divine aid and assistance, whereby I am enabled to guide my steps consistent with his holy will; let us then confess with the apostle, *I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing*. We ought ever to acknowledge, *O Lord! righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us blushing and confusion of face!* . . . . . There is a gradation from the lowest order of animated creation; for, as no man knows the things of man, save the spirit of a man that is in him, so no man knows the things of God, but by the Spirit of God. As the fruit cannot with any propriety be good from a perverse root, by deviating from the bounds prescribed by the Former of heaven and earth, continued throughout the superior order of created beings, no more can we judge of divine matters by a mere knowledge derived from human power, and the natural understanding faculties of our own minds; but we must enter into that within the veil; and be cloathed with a superior light and understanding, from that power which has brought life and immortality to light by the gospel: therefore, let no man deceive you, be ye not deceived; for such as every man sows, such shall he reap.

1. There is another species of deception, that it seems necessary to apprize and warn you of, who profess the religion of our Lord Jesus Christ, under the various names and distinct professions we may make in the world, amongst those who lay too much stress upon their various professions, and upon a belief of truth, by giving the bare assent of our judgment to the testimony of others; this has been a species of imposition too much pursued and depended upon, whereby names have passed for things, and a profession of religion has passed for religion itself; a rectitude of sentiment has often been deemed a sufficient atonement for irregularity of life; but it is impossible for us to adopt a life of religion, and yet retain a life to the world, as the christian religion, which is of the highest authority and dignity, enforces the irreconcilable contrariety of these natures; but it is possible to adopt a dependance upon notion and in tradition, and yet be utter strangers to the life of true christianity. I know not scarce a greater instance of deception amongst professors of the christian name, than with those who would contend for orthodoxy of system, and strenuously support the superior importance of their own opinions, which has often proved a means of stirring up hatred and persecution one towards another, and that under the specious pretext of being *for Christ's sake*; but it abundantly discovers, that all the powers of deception, hath surrounded and fortified them in a dangerous security, which it is very difficult ever to be extricated from.

But let no man deceive you, or be ye not deceived ; what signifies a persuasion or assent to truth, if we live not a life consistent with the purity and holiness of its nature, and correspondent with the precepts of the gospel ?

2. If the mind was properly engaged to pursue the genuine effects of the spirit of truth, (a disposition which ought ever to be prevalent and cultivated amongst us,) we should then abundantly demonstrate a being born not of corruption, but of the incorruptible seed, through the word of God, which liveth and abideth in you for ever, whereby we are made partakers in the essential virtue of the christian religion. It matters not to me by what name I am called, or however distinguished amongst men, if I am but admitted into a fellowship with the church of the first born ; the provision of God, for those who are called by his Spirit, that are influenced and guided in wisdom, and finally intended to be received into glory.

Under these two classes stands the bulk of the christian world, and on these two natures depends the final, decisive sentence of, *come ye blessed*, or *depart ye cursed*.

To you that lay more stress upon human inventions, and orthodox systems ; who hold a reverence for names, and for external appearances, be not deceived ; inasmuch as the spirit of true religion remains the same, under every name, it lives in every form, and is confined to none, being one

in itself, unchangeable and powerful in its energy, sanctifying the soul, and whereby the heart is made pure in the sight of God ; and then the fruits will be unto holiness, and the end life everlasting.

But there has been a lamentable deception prevalent over the minds of many, who are dead to religion and religious impressions : these would acknowledge and assent with the tongue, though perhaps their judgment proceeded no farther than from the reasoning faculties of their own minds, without regard to the powerful motives contained in that excellent description of christianity, or the efficacious tendency of it, *with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the tongue, confession is made unto salvation* ; for where a confession of the mouth is made, there is great need for a concurrence with the heart, from a feeling sense of the powerful principle and life of religion in the soul.

*Be not deceived.*

There is another sort of people under all names and distinctions of religion, to whom also this caution seems exceedingly necessary, and amongst whom the precepts of the gospel have lost their force ; these would imagine, that the way to the kingdom of God is varied from that prescribed by the holy Author of the christian faith. It is a strait and narrow way ; they would plead no possibility of living up to truth, but pursue the general practice of mankind ; and plead that, as truth itself is

lost, it must now be fetched from the land of general practice, and the general conduct of themselves and others : but God is unchangeable in his nature, and his relative attributes remain the same throughout every dispensation of the world, and the foundation of God standeth independent of all deficiency (in whom is no variableness or shadow of turning) of all the deceivable inventions of such sons of formality, and deceived souls in all ages, that have been unwilling to submit to the inflexible law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus ; these would endeavour to acquit themselves with the more flexible law of general practice, and general conduct ; varied according to their inclinations, indulging every sensuality, and spending their time in the pursuit of earthly pleasures. These would build their expectations upon the merciful attributes of that Being whom they offend : and neglect to consider that a time will come, when justice as well as mercy, will be recompensed to every man according to his deeds, whether they be good or evil.

It is an endless commandment, and can never be abrogated ; That the soul that sins shall die ; and remains over the heads of all mankind, who yield themselves to present pleasures, and give up their minds to follow after lying vanities ; who, nevertheless would have a portion in the unspeakable enjoyment of an endless futurity, and an admission within the consecrated mansions of eternal glory ; but I would caution these not to be deceived, for God is not mocked, and we shall cer-

tainly find it so, when every human aid, with the powers of deception, shall disappear; or it will prove a fatal witness against all the pleasing expectations of a deluded hope.

But such is the progress of the work of that liar and murderer, to introduce a concurrence of agreement, with disagreement into the affairs of Providence; that some have imagined He looks not with that vigilance towards the work of his hand, which revealed religion teaches us to expect from the powerful effects of his divine notice and regard, whose mercy is great, or else we should not be able to stand before him; but he is righteous as well as merciful, in all his ways, and will by no means suffer uncleanness to enter his holy habitation, but will hasten the punishment of guilt upon the impenitent soul; and those who obdurately proceed in a course of deviation from their morning light, whereby they love the capacity of distinguishing betwixt light and darkness, or the disagreement of happiness and misery.—These, notwithstanding, would gladly look at the glorious light of heaven, and hope at large for an admission into the sacred mansions of everlasting day; but the purity of his nature will admit no uncleanness to enter his kingdom: all those attributes of God, of justice as well as mercy, remain immoveable, and fixed in the righteous appointment of unerring wisdom; and therefore let no obstacle hinder our approaches before the throne of his Holiness, to render every attribute of praise to Him, whose infinite and adorable perfections, are

eminently manifested, in the uniform and glorious establishment of his sacred church and family : therefore, be not deceived, by any of the powers of darkness, or led to rely upon the strength of external performances, what is called divine service, or the frequent performance of religious duties, so called ; all these, when under a proper government and in season, proceeding from a proportion of grace and strength given, are profitable, and we become engaged to join in that universal song of praise arising from every heart, of the spiritual creation of God.

But when the minds of any become divested of this animating qualification, by which alone we are enabled to approach the Father of Spirits in spirit and in truth, our dependence upon exterior performances will only prove a witness against us, and be ranked among the catalogue of our sins, in the day when the secrets of every heart shall be divulged, and a righteous recompense is given to each : therefore be not deceived by a seeming sanctity, or the frequent performance of religious duties, so called, without a co-operation with the object of faith and practice, and a mental assent to the force of those truths most surely believed and received among us ; for it is from the inward frame and disposition of our minds, in which alone an acceptable sacrifice can be offered to the Author of our being.

*Be not deceived.*

I would, in a few more expressions, endeavour to assert the power of God unto salvation.

*God is not mocked.*—We may, and it is to be feared, sometimes do, mock ourselves, by depending upon riches, and the delusive prospects of earthly pleasures,—by external appearances,—by the false traffic of unfelt truths;—with a name to religion and a resemblance to truth. But it is impossible to mock God; he is not mocked by the most specious appearances of regular pretensions; we can never impose upon the sagacity of that infinite Eye, which penetrates the most secret recesses of the human heart.—Our most secret thoughts are ever exposed to his omniscient view—*God is not mocked.*

Let us beware lest we mock ourselves, by delusive appearances of transient happiness, and a peace, short of that peace of God which passeth the understandings of men; for, *the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth who are his—and let all those that call upon the name of Christ, depart from iniquity.\**

Such as every man sows, such shall he reap. If his conduct is correspondent with the spirit of the world, if his demeanor and walking be after the rule of the flesh, *of the flesh he shall reap corruption*, from that miserable crop. *To be carnally minded is death*;—a death to religion, and an alienation from the light of his countenance: *but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.*—*The carnal mind is not subject to the law of God, neither in-*

\* 2 Timothy ii. 9.

*deed can be* ; being ever at contrariety, in its own nature, to that purity and holiness, the requisite effects of genuine christianity, diffused throughout every part of his sanctified church and family.

I would therefore recommend to each individual within the audience of my voice, let their name and profession of religion be what they may, seriously to weigh the importance of these considerations, and to make these momentous enquiries:—What am I sowing to? What spirit is predominant? Under what power do I live? In what service am I engaged? Do I properly regard the assertion of our Lord Jesus Christ?—*He that loves any thing more than me, is not worthy of me.* If I am sowing to the flesh, I am in a state of deception, moved and turned from my purpose of being ; I have met with something more amiable and engaging, and better adapted to my natural inclination, than the love of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And, finally, to you of all names and distinctions of religion, whatsoever degree of temporal happiness, whatsoever advantages any may derive from the praise of the world, or the profession of transient glory, any soul may possibly enjoy, in the estimation of mankind. The righteous God has fixed, as an invariable decision,—that if you sow to the flesh, you shall of the flesh reap corruption ; but, if you sow to the spirit, however painful, however exercised, or despised, secretly

surrounded with distress and anxiety, within and without, mourning, lamentation and woe, trodden under foot, or despised amongst men ; under whatever difficulties we may have to pass, however mournful or painful our allotment in life may be, lift up thy head in hope : for, if we sow to the spirit, of the spirit we shall finally reap the glorious crop of life everlasting.

*The following heads of a Discourse was delivered at Horsleydown meeting, upon the close of a visit to Friends' families in that quarter, the 19th of the Eleventh Month, 1769.*

A SOLEMN summons which the Almighty gave through his prophet Joel, to a people whom he had known above all the families of the earth, (at a time when they had revolted and departed in heart from him) has been revived in my mind; with an apprehension that the same authority requires the republication of it in this day, to a people likewise highly favoured of him; and who have in like manner departed from their first love:

“ Blow the trumpet in Zion---sanctify a fast---call a solemn assembly---gather the people---sanctify the congregation---assemble the elders---gather the children and those that suck the breast---let the bride-groom go forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her closet---let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar: let them say, spare thy people, O Lord! and give not thy heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them! wherefore should they say amongst the people, where is their God? then will the Lord be jealous over his land and pity his people.”\*

\* Joel ii. 15, 16, 17, 18.

As I am about to conclude (perhaps finally conclude) my labours amongst you in this quarter; I would query with some, with many that are present, whether they have not heard intelligibly the sound of the trumpet, calling them with a degree of certainty, to arise and prepare themselves for the battle.

My brethren and sisters, amongst whom I have been constrained, in the overflowings of the Father's love, to labour in a private capacity, breaking (I hope I may say) a little bread from house to house—the everlasting Gospel has been preached amongst you, with all the force of pathetic energy, with all the tenderness of divine compassion: let it not be ineffectual! The Gospel message has been delivered with such indubitable clearness, that your judgments have been convinced, you have assented to *the truth as it is in Jesus* :\* suffer not the impressions it has made on your minds to be speedily erased. Far, very far, be it from me to think highly of myself, to exalt the officer, the minister. I would not that you should hold any man's person in high estimation. I am deeply sensible that to me belongs *blushing and confusion of face*, but I magnify mine office, and the power of Him who has seen meet to employ me therein; I would endeavour to exalt in your view, the adorable goodness and condescension of the great Author of all mercies, in that he has caused the trumpet to be renewedly sounded in

\* Ephesians iv. 21.

your borders ; hear its important message with suitable attention ; let it rouse and prepare all the ranks in the armies of our Israel, to engage in the glorious cause of our God. Let the daughter of our Zion arise from the bed of indolence ; from the lethargic stupor of a fatal forgetfulness ; from all the deadening, benumbing gratifications of sensuality, and shake herself from the dust of the earth, that she may come up to the help of Him who hath called her with an high and holy calling. The trumpet is blown in her streets, the alarm has been heard by all, Oh ! let not its language be rendered unintelligible by the multiplicity of trivial things, that too much absorb the minds of many.

I am fully persuaded, that the gracious visitation of humbling, melting goodness, has been afresh extended to individuals present, in (I had almost said) a very memorable manner ; nor will I recall the expression, for if it is not treasured up in your remembrance now, for your profit and advantage, it will be memorable in that awful approaching period, when every neglected mercy will appear deeply engraven, as a dread *hand-writing on the wall*,\* against us. Let me, therefore, tenderly entreat you, with all the warmth of unutterable affection, as a brother, as a fellow-pilgrim, through the vicissitudes of time, to the unmixed joys of a happy eternity, that you will no longer neglect the offers of mercy, or turn a deaf ear to the reproofs of in-

\* Daniel v. 5.

struction. I feel my mind covered with that boundless love, that wishes, that ardently desires, you may indeed be wise for yourselves: For, although I may be deficient in many qualifications of a gospel minister, I am not wanting in that pure, disinterested love, which seeks not yours but you.

*Blow the trumpet in Zion ; sanctify a fast.*

If we were but enough attentive to the sound of the trumpet, we should see the absolute necessity of this sanctified fast ; a fast from every of those delusive pleasures, those slavish attachments, that render the mind insensible of good. *Call a solemn assembly.* This branch of the summons (may some say) belongs only to a few, and we have no share in the duty it enjoins. I confess I am of another opinion ; I think every individual has a share in the instruction couched in it. *Call a solemn assembly.* Oh, you active ones ! stop a while in your swift career ; make a solemn pause ; stand collected from every object that can gratify or delight the sensual part ; labour diligently to assemble all the powers and faculties of your souls, that they may be sanctified by Him who gave them. I believe there is no useless, dead, unactive member in the Church of God ; and those that can thus assemble the collected attention of a redeemed mind, devoted to the Divine will, have an undoubted right from the highest Authority, to call an holy convocation. *We can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth,\** was the language of

some formerly, who had indeed sanctified an acceptable fast. I much desire that those who, perhaps cannot be so active in promoting this glorious cause amongst the sons of men, as some who are called into more eminent stations in the church, may, by a circumspect care over all their words and actions, see that they do nothing against the truth. *Call a solemn assembly ; gather the people.* How scattered are many of the members of this quarter ! scattered indeed as sheep without a shepherd ! dispersed up and down in the dark vale of insensibility and self-forgetfulness ! many upon the barren mountains of an empty profession ; lost to all sense of religious fellowship ; unacquainted with that holy union in which is the bond of Peace ! How many are the Gallios I have met with amongst you, who (alas ! it may be said) care for none of these things ! Oh, you Elders ! who are, or might have been, as Pillars in the Lord's house ! you delegated Shepherds, who might have adorned the first ranks in the armies of our Israel, if you had not sat down, and taken up a rest short of those glorious abodes, which are prepared for them that steadily persevere in the line of divine appointment—to you the call is, *gather the people.*

*Am I my brother's keeper ?\** let it suffice for me, that I look to myself, and that my own family is in tolerable order, is a language that too much prevails. But, Oh ! that you had the cause of God more at heart ! that you were more engaged

\* Genesis iv. 9.

to gather the people ; that you might with a Fatherly care, overlook those whose minds at present resemble the barren desert, the uncultivated wilderness ; that you might comfort and encourage them that tread the gloomy scenes of an adverse allotment, as it were cut off from every joy, and alive to each painful sensibility ; how would it comfort many of these, if an experienced friend was now and then to drop into their families, and at times speak a word, in the opening of Divine Wisdom, suitable to their several states ; I believe it would be a great means of gathering the people. Why should your care be circumscribed within the narrow limits of your own families ? (although they should certainly be well regulated,) but you might be more extensively serviceable, if thus engaged in the care of the Household of God. I am persuaded that the Divine Wing would be over you, and that a blessing would attend your labours. It is not a time for us to dwell unconcerned in our ceiled houses, when the house of God lies waste ! We have, many of us, the same tender connexions as you ; I myself have the same endearing attachments as some of you, the same ties of domestic love, and perhaps as deeply sensible of all their force, as some of you ; not less attentive to every relative and social duty, than some of you ; my nature is not harsh, my principles much less so ; yet I am made willing to leave all, to come and labour with you ; if so be I might be instrumental to rouse any to a more arduous pursuit of their everlasting interest ; and I can freely acknowledge, with humble thankfulness,

that I never more fully experienced my peace to flow as a river; never could with greater joy say, *Return, Oh my soul, to the place of thy rest, for the Lord thy God hath dealt bountifully with thee!*\* than when I have been thus engaged in extensive private labours; visiting the sick; reviving the sorrowful; encouraging the disconsolate; strengthening the weak; watching over and carefully admonishing the giddy incautious youth; and I doubt not but you would have the reward of peace in your own bosoms, if, as heads of the society, you were more often thus employed in endeavouring to *gather the people*.

*Sanctify the congregation; assemble the elders.* I have been deeply concerned to see some of the elders so deficient in filling the line of divine appointment. If they were more frequently engaged to assemble under the holy influence of that power in which they should move, they would many of them be commanded to *blow the trumpet in Zion*; but I know of no state harder to speak to, or more difficult to reach, than that of an elder whose mind is overgrown by the earthly nature; *Oh! earth, earth, earth! hear the word of the Lord!*† I do not recollect any other instance in sacred writ, where attention is demanded in a similar manner; *Oh! earth, earth, earth!* thus thrice repeated, plainly signifying the great difficulty there is in reaching to those, who are as it were, buried in the earth, whose minds are fixed in it.

\* Psalm cxvi. 7.

† Jer. xxii. 29.

*Gather the children.* You that have the rising youth under your care, let me call upon you, let me entreat you, to *gather the children*; gather them from all the bewitching, enticing allurements of the world; gather their attention to that of God in their own minds. Oh! how have I secretly mourned, to see the poor children so sorrowfully neglected! so uninstructed! so much estranged to that holy divine principle, which would so exceedingly beautify and enrich them! but, alas! how few parents are rightly qualified to teach their children the law of divine love! to instill into their tender minds proper sentiments; to cultivate upon them those impressions that would be of everlasting advantage; and if the children, when the gracious visitation of the Father of mercies moves upon their hearts, warming and animating them with a love of virtue, raising the secret sigh, and begetting desires after heaven and holiness; I say, if the children should then ask the negligent parent—"What is the secret something which I feel? this principle which impresses my mind with the love of virtue? what is it? what value shall I set upon it?" How then can you give them suitable instruction? you cannot teach them obedience to its sacred dictates, when your own example speaks a language quite opposite: Oh! why should the Sea Monster be brought against you! "The Sea Monster draweth forth the breast to her young, but the daughter of my people is become cruel, like the ostrich in the wilderness, that leaveth her eggs in the sand to be hatched by the beams of the sun, and considereth not that the foot of the passenger

may crush them !” \*—the daughter of my people hath left her tender offspring to the uncertainty of being accidentally benefited, or I should rather say, to the mercy of God, unasked, unsought, exposed to all the dangers of a dreary wilderness, unaided, unassisted by the care of a natural parent! The tongue of the sucking child cleaveth to the roof of its mouth for thirst ! the children ask bread, and there is none, in many families, to break it ; they want to be nourished by the sincere milk of the word, but, alas ! *the daughter of my people is become cruel !* Oh, you parents ! you delegated shepherds ! what account will you have to render, when the Lord of the whole earth ariseth to make inquisition for blood !

Bear with me, my beloved friends ; flattery and smooth tales may please fools, but they will not please Him whom I desire to serve in the gospel of his Son. All that is within me is moved, while I thus earnestly expostulate with you on behalf of the dear children ; suffer me to entreat you, for God’s sake, for your own soul’s sake, for the sake of the cause of truth, *gather the children and those that suck the breast ;* those that are filling themselves with the world’s consolation, with the intoxicating pleasures and amusements of a degenerate age ; wean them from these delights ; gather them to the knowledge of themselves, to a sense of the mercies that are offered them by the great Author of Mercies ancient and new. *While thy*

\* Lamentations iv. 3.

† Job xxxix. 14, 15.

*servant was busied hither and thither, the man made his escape,\** was the vain excuse of the officer to whose custody a certain captive was committed, with this charge, *take care of this man till I come, and if thou let him go, thy life shall go for his life.†* No plea of other engagements, nor even the want of ability to discharge our duty towards our offspring, will stand us in any stead; if, when the Almighty queries with us—"What hast thou done with those Lambs I left under thy care in the wilderness, those tender offspring I gave thee in charge!" we have through neglect, through unwatchfulness, suffered him or her to go, but we shall most certainly, stand accountable for his or her life. I said want of ability, because I assuredly believe, that want of ability will be so far from a palliation of the crime, that it will rather increase our condemnation: can we plead want of ability, to Him who is always ready to furnish us with it, if we are but willing to receive it at his hand?

I am of opinion, respecting many of our youth, that if they had been properly instructed, and carefully watched over; if they could have seen the beauty of holiness shine in the example of their parents, they would not have gone out so widely as they have. Oh, you parents of both sexes! an important trust is reposed in you! example your children in the practice of piety; example speaks louder, much louder than precept; its influence is far more extensive. And while, on

\* 1 Kings xx. 40.

† 1 Kings xx. 39.

the one hand, you are excited to a faithful discharge of your duty towards them, by the certain hope of a glorious reward ; so, on the other hand, the powerful ties of natural affection, the warm solicitude for the happiness of those you love, must stir up to diligence in the work and service appointed you.

*Gather the children.* If, after your attentive care has been employed, for their preservation ; if, after, by the forceable voice of example, you have called them to the perfecting of holiness in the fear of God, they will go, they will turn aside into the by-ways and crooked paths of sin and iniquity, they must stand by their own choice ; you have redeemed your souls, and will be found in your lots at the end of time, a ponderous crown awaits you ; you will close your eyes, and open them, to the boundless fruition of unmixed joy, in a happy eternity !

We do sometimes with sorrow observe, the unwearyed labours of a parent's love, bestowed without the desired effect ; it is mournful to see children pierce with bitterness and anxiety the breast that has been their support in their infantile years ; to fill that eye with sorrow, that has dropt over them the tear of maternal fondness ; it is a cruel thing for a child to mingle gall and wormwood, in the cup of a parent descending to the grave ; let us be assured, that their own portion of gall and wormwood will be doubly increased thereby, in the solemn hour of just retribution ! But, Oh,

beloved youth ! I earnestly desire that you may never thus widely deviate from the paths of rectitude ; it is on you, the hope of the present age must shortly devolve ; may you wisely choose an early submission to the holy discipline of the cross of Christ, that you may come up as an army for God. Consider the uncertainty of your stay here ; consider the important business of life ; and let the love of every unprofitable delight be swallowed up in the arduous pursuit of glory, honour, immortality and eternal life. We are daily instructed by the powerful eloquent language of mortality ; death invades all ranks, snatches those of all ages from the busy stage of life ; she that was yesterday surrounded with nuptial joys, must to-morrow be confined within the cold inclosure of the silent grave ! *Let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her closet ;* let the young, the joyous, those that are in the bloom of life, leave every thing that tends to retard their progress towards the city of the saints' solemnity ; let them relinquish their most exalted satisfactions, rather than neglect to lay hold on the joys of God's salvation ; which are unutterably more desirable, than all the sin-pleasing gratifications that this world can bestow.

*Let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar ;* this should not be confined to those only, whose mouths may be opened publicly amongst you, for it belongs to all those who preach to others by the regularity of a Godly life and conversation : although we are

favoured with a living ministry of divine appointment, who dare not fill the ears of men with a repetition of unfelt truths, nor amuse them with the unprofitable productions of an empty mind, but are concerned to discharge themselves faithfully, *as stewards of the mysteries of God*, yet let them be joined by all those that mourn for the desolation of Zion; by all that wish peace within her walls, and prosperity within her palaces, let us weep between the porch and the altar, saying, *Spare thy people, O Lord! and give not thy heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them! wherefore should they say among the people, where is their God?* If we are thus unitedly engaged on behalf of our Israël, it may be that the Lord will again *be jealous over his land*, with an holy jealousy, for I cannot think that a people whom he has raised by his own invincible power, and so signally placed his Name amongst, were ever designed to be only the transient glory of a couple of centuries, I am still revived by a secret hope of better times; when our Zion shall again put on her beautiful garments; and in her, and with her, shall arise judges as at the first, and counsellors and lawgivers as at the beginning; let us weep between the porch and the altar; let us intercede for the people, that the land may yet be spared! the gracious ear of our heavenly Father is still open to the supplications of his children, and I believe he will yet *be jealous over his land and pity his people*. The time approaches, when the great dasher in pieces, will more and more come up amongst us, and may all who are broken by him, wait to be healed by

the arising of his love ; I shall not live to see it, but I live in the faith, and I believe I shall die in the faith, that the Lord of Hosts will yet beautify the place of his feet, that our *Zion will yet become an eternal excellency, and Jerusalem the praise of the whole earth.\**

Let us weep between the porch and the altar, with unwearied intercession, for *the Lord will yet be jealous over his land, and pity his people.* The bowels of adorable compassion yet yearn over his children, with all the tenderness of a Father's love. *How shall I give thee up, O Ephraim ! How shall I make thee as Admah, and set thee as Zeboim !†* How shall I cut thee off from being a people before me ? By this moving and pathetic language, would the great Father of the Universe, induce you to return to the Arms of everlasting Mercy ! And if we, who are placed as watchmen in Zion, faithfully discharge the trust reposed in us, we shall be made instrumental in gathering the scattered and dispersed sheep, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south, to the great Shepherd, to the one Sheepfold ; and finally obtain an admittance into those glorious mansions, where the morning stars join in singing hallelujahs ! and where all the sons of God forever shout for joy !

Now, unto the King Eternal, immortal, invisible, the only GOD, be honour and praise for ever and ever !

\* Isaiah lx. 15. lxii. 7.

† Hosea xl. 8.

*A Discourse delivered at Bradford, the 17th day  
of the Eighth Month, 1770.*

ALTHOUGH there is (unhappily for themselves) a spirit of dissipation and incredulity, with respect to matters of the highest importance, too visibly prevalent in many minds; yet it is pleasing and comfortable to me to have reason to believe, that in many others an enquiry is raised after the way to life and salvation.

*O Lord! who shall shew us any good?*

An enquiry, worthy of being inculcated and adopted with sincerity and impartiality; and I have no doubt of its being crowned with the desired success, to every honest and sincere queriest.

I think the day in which we live, through the awakening virtue of Divine Mercy, furnishes many instances or subjects like this which the Evangelical Prophet applied to, with the gracious invitation of the Author and Well-Spring of all that is good, an invitation which has sometimes warmed me, and is affectionately raised in my heart towards this assembly.

“Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat, yea come, buy wine and milk without

money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness."

This is an invitation which may have little meaning or significancy in it, to those minds who are strangers (unhappily strangers) to the beginning of the spiritual creation of God, as forming and fashioning itself, in holiness unto glory; but it is expressive, and intelligible, to such minds as have been happily desirous of knowledge of Him in whom they have professed to believe, and measureably witnessed the entrance of that Spirit as both light and life, which is justly and pertinently called the *Quickening Spirit*, for it is by the influence, the enlivening of this quickening spirit, we must be made (if we ever are made) living souls to God, initiated into, and built up in that life which is eternally happy.

We are incapable of either hunger or thirst, but through the enlivening of this quickening Spirit. Hunger and thirst are acts appertaining to life.—The dead have not those sensations, who are naturally or spiritually dead. It was by the efficacious work of that holy *wind that bloweth where it listeth*, that the dead dry bones were drawn into a divine resemblance, in the former state of mankind, and whereby they were brought together, and united to their respective places in the heavenly body, quickened, raised, formed a living army

to God : but it was an utter impossibility for any power short of that *Creating divine power*, to bring together those dead dry bones : and indeed the similitude, I confess, seems worthy of that wisdom that delivered it. They were human bones, there was a degree of fitness in their form and construction, for membership and for assimilating one with another : but I conceive, that notwithstanding this inherent virtue or ability in the dead dry bones to assimilate one with another, they had certainly lain till the consummation of all things, but for that supernatural breath or wind of divine power, which raised them unto life. And I freely own that I believe something of this nature hath attended the minds of many in those days in which we live, that would be to them as the quickening Spirit, the principal object in the rudiments of a divine life, and enable us to live in the obedience of an holy faith here, and to be raised to the enjoyment of endless good hereafter. This is what I wish for all those, who are on their way to an holy habitation, where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary soul enjoys eternal rest !

And, as having received mercy and a degree of merciful experience from the Author of my being, I find some engagement to point out some steps which have produced the first fruits of the spiritual creation of God, and what hath been the means of debilitating some in their race, or turning aside others from following the works of an unavailing profession.

For, as I have said, I have no doubt that the present awakening upon many minds, is of a divine nature : and it may be known whence it proceeds, its original may be traced by thus considering whether it more abounds in heavenly desires, or in desires after the things of this life.

In the mystery of ungodliness, there is a life that imitates the life of Christ, but it is a life that must die, if ever we live acceptably to God. It is a life resulting from self-love and a love of this world, wherein the prince of the powers of the air bears rule in the children of disobedience, that presents its similitude and desires after heaven.

Let me die the death of the righteous. Let me flee from the wrath to come : let me have an inheritance in the kingdom of peace, world without end. This is a language uttered by many, though perhaps they continue in the gratification of corrupt nature, and consequently have no part in that life, that incorruptible, undefiled life, which alone can obtain an inheritance in the kingdom of God. Flesh and blood cannot inherit this kingdom and its life. These desires, these wishes after a state of happiness, and desires after heaven, have frequently, in many minds, proceeded from vitiated corrupted self, having built up a visionary hope, and hence they have estimated its success, according to the warmth of desire after life, and a life in that *flesh and blood which cannot inherit the kingdom of God.*

I am very apprehensive too many have mistaken this ardor of mind for the production of good, the kingdom of God, though in an unsanctified, unconverted state, and, in the warmth and fervour of this fire they have kindled, the kingdom of heaven hath suffered a kind of violence ; in this mistaken state, wherein too many have endangered their present and eternal happiness ; and in their spiritual race, involved themselves in this most dangerous mistake, by how much the more we may approach a resemblance to religion, and are not in it ; being amused with an imitation of divine life, and at the same time not actuated by it. This is to constitute the danger under which we live, to entertain desires after heaven, when not possessed of heavenly virtue.

“ Let me be holy ; let me die the death destined for me to die.”—Thus heavenly desires take in the means as well as the end ; “ O Lord, prepare me for thy kingdom !” Let not thy hand spare, nor thine eye pity, till judgment pass upon the Mount of Edom, Esau’s first production ; turn thy hand upon me, purge away all my dross, take away all my sin, and refine as the reprobate silver.

As our desires are thus raised after the fountain of divine life, the glorious and holy Quickener will ever draw to a similitude to its Author ; and desires after heaven, not merely for its safety, but for its purity ; not merely as a place of exemption from pain, anxiety and sorrow, but as the habita-

tion of sanctified and holy spirits. Now this is to bring religion and religious labour where it ought to exist, from the vision of the head, to the feeling emotions of the heart; it lays the axe to the root of every superficial branch. *The axe is laid to the root of the tree, and every tree that bringeth forth not good fruit, is hewn down and cast into the fire;* and the virtue of this divine invitation is diffused and proclaimed throughout all the powers of the soul.

*Ho, every one that thirsteth,* in whom this divine life has arisen, that take in the glorious object, not only its end, but the means that can lift up the heart with the hands to God in the heavens, in ardent supplication, that he may refine, sanctify, and purge away their sins; that he may wash them from all iniquity, and by the assimilating virtue of divine grace, be restored to an union with the Holy Spirit. These are then enabled to serve him in the beauty of holiness and the newness of life.

*Ho, every one that thirsteth,* every one in whom a thirst has been raised, and in whom a thirst has arisen, after the animating virtue of the Quickening Spirit, may you continue in an awful reverent sense of that goodness and mercy, that has thus visited you, and caused a sense of the want of that food, wherewith Christ feeds his flock, to take place in your hearts.

There are some people quite too high for religion; alas! some others think themselves too low

for religion, in whom an anxious solicitude is become depressed with fear, and who are on the verge of despair, not sufficiently considering the efficacious virtue of that power that would sanctify, and prepare, in affliction, for future glory and happiness. Some are ready to lament their situation, and to adopt these mournful enquiries :—"What have I to do with religion?—Will God accept the labour of my hands for the mansions of light and life?—I would endeavour with diligence to fill up the duties of my day; I would seek the consolation of my God, but it is forever hid from me." This has often been the language insinuated by the grand deceiver and enemy of mankind's happiness; for though our heavenly Father, that cloathes the seasons with variety, may diversify the day with affliction, he would yet draw us near to himself; and know, for thy encouragement, there is abundant access, through the one glorious Mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we are admitted into that within the veil; his ears are open to our requests, as to the cherubim and seraphim, with their holy, holy, holy, in the habitation of light and bliss. He is the God and Father of us all, he that is their God, he is my God, he is thy God, thy Father, and thy Friend, from whom this proclamation of unbounded mercy is gone forth : *Ho, every one that thirsteth*, every one in this divine life is raised, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money come, buy and eat, buy wine and milk without money and without price.

As it is of divine original this life proceeds from, so it must be something adequate to its own nature

that can satisfy it, and an hunger after it, proceeding from the God of life, and a diffusion of his Spirit; and it is in the holy animating virtue of it we cry, Abba, Father! to Him that dwells in glory.

This is the divine life :—It is a life that will be strength to the feeble, and refresh the thirsty soul. This is the life that is properly called religion, and ever subsists in the kingdom of the Almighty God, and Father of heaven and earth, and throughout the spiritual creation of his Son :—It is the same life that breathes to man in secret sorrow and complaint—it is in the fulness of the same, that the loftiest oblation of worship ascends to God on high, from all who are virtually united to his sanctified church, and family, both in heaven and earth. We may be distinguished by various names, or different modes, with regard to circumstantial points, but it is the animating life of Christ that lives through all form, and is one both in heaven and earth. It leads to itself, to thirst after itself, consistent with its own nature. It has seen an end of all perfection in imaginary views of things, through the divine commandment of God.

*I have seen an end of all perfection, but thy commandments are exceeding broad.*—It is a life that cannot be satisfied with any thing that this world can afford, neither can it be content with the most specious professions of truth; it cannot be content with all the riches of a name, nor with the formality in which some take up their rest.—It

aspires after something greater, something higher, that will remain when the elements shall melt with fervent heat, and all things visible will fade ; when every specious pretence, or lofty profession, in which mankind unhappily place their confidence, will no longer avail : But it is through an uniform progress in a life of righteousness, we are admitted to the celestial banquet of divine love, and, having obtained an entrance into the most holy place, are enabled to offer the incense of worship with the first born among many generations, in the life and love of the Lord Jesus Christ.

There is a probability sometimes of those that have been measurably quickened and enlivened, who have received a portion of heavenly gift, that would qualify and prepare them for eternal life ; there is a probability of these turning aside from the spirit of life into the oldness of the letter, turning from a steady progress in the knowledge of Him in whom they have believed, into a dependence on exterior rites and shadowy performances, a figurative resemblance, or something they would gladly hope acceptable in the sight of God.

I have seen instances in the course of my life, of some whose souls were once awakened to a desire after the animating virtue of divine life, as the alpha, or beginning of the spiritual creation of God ; when desires were formed after heaven, and yet they have turned aside from an arduous, laborious, steady following on their way ; and, if I may be allowed the expression, have lost them-

selves in the flowery fields of imagination : These are ready to think they have attained a sufficient knowledge of religion and religious duties, and this knowledge has been substituted instead of practice, the musing of the head to the vital sensations of the heart, a profession without the possession of practical virtue ; these by similitude, may be said to be lost in the flowery fields of imagination ; they have lost that light which hath graciously visited them, that holy sense of innocency which once adorned their minds, and in whom were opened a door of hope and divine consolation to their thirsty souls. Alas ! that any should thus fall away from their eternal interest, by continuing to neglect the duties of their day, who are intent and fixt in the notional part without the obedience of faith, and attention to the refreshing virtue of *the day springing from on high* : For, as happiness consists in the enjoyment of this essential good, may you so follow on to know it, as fashioning you in every Christian virtue, and be confirmed in the possession of divine and ardent charity : but beware of that knowledge which puffeth up, and tends not to edification : and may you endeavour to encrease in the stability of wisdom with knowledge, and to advance from glory to glory, and from one degree of faith to another, in a daily filial dependence upon Him, who is willing to save, and able to deliver to the utmost, all them that come unto God by him.

The holy apostle was led to observe the lamentable state of the Galatian churches, amongst whom

he had laboured and been instrumental to raise the first fruits of divine visitation, wherein many had been quickened and raised to a sense of life ; and yet he expostulates with them after this manner : *O foolish Galatians ! who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth crucified among you ?* They, having begun in the Spirit, thought to be made perfect in the flesh ; but it is not by any acts which the flesh is capable of performing, in the multiplicity of external services, proposed as the means of salvation, that can perfect the soul. It is here too many are strangers to spiritual christianity, and are alienated from the spring of divine knowledge, which would arise in the dependant thirsty soul ; that visits you oftener than the morning, and would raise desires after life, in all those minds who attentively view its discoveries, whether to see that my duty be according to the knowiege I have received, or whether I fill up with propriety the duties of my day ; this would lead the mind where it ought to be led, that is, into a close and solemn enquiry after the state and condition of their own souls, which is of God, and what is contrary to his heavenly will.

Hearing is not worship : the labour of the voice, a multitude of words, are not worship ; these simply, cannot constitute the essential part of *divine service* ; for, though we may pronounce all the truths recorded in holy writ, they cannot answer in us this secret cry, *Lord, Lord ! prepare me for thy kingdom* ; they are insufficient to redeem us

from the power of death, hell, and the grave ; but the work of righteousness is deeper than any superficial form ; it is higher than a mere profession, or a name even to the most excellent truths that ever were uttered by man. What then is divine worship ? since it consists not in the labour of the tongue, nor proceeds from the head ? but it is the secret aspirations of the soul to God, in every humble and enlightened mind. I will pray with the Spirit, and with the understanding also, whether I use words, or no words, whether language fail, or whether it do not. We have occasion for language in our mutual engagements, or converse one with another : but the Holy, Infinite Spirit, by one instinctive act of vision, beholds all the various states and dispositions of mankind.—*I will look towards the holy temple*, towards the habitations of HIM, whose penetrating eye includes the most secret thoughts and intents of every heart : *I will look towards thy holy temple*—in this look, in this flame, the mind is prepared to offer an acceptable sacrifice to God, the Lord of heaven, and the whole earth.

Beware of having begun in the Spirit, and following the fleshly performances of those things which may present themselves as a resemblance of religious duties. Be what you are, not by a form, or profession, or any contrivance of mankind ; but be what you are by the grace of God, and then I make no doubt but a thirst will then prevail, and *blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.* This blessing

was pronounced by Him that never failed nor ever will, in the performance of the covenant he has made.

*Blessed are they which hunger and thirst after righteousness.* As heavenly desires are raised after that food that would satisfy the soul, it is thus the mind is replenished with the virtue of divine life; for *blessed are they which hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.* This is a promise he would graciously accomplish, in the experience of mankind more and more universally, to supply the hunger of such who may have refused comfort, and these he would satisfy with the good things of eternal life.

But there are, who substitute a similitude, instead of practical virtue; and to those appears applicable the mysterious meaning of that expression, which was formerly the language of the church, as cultivated on the mind, *I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the hinds, and by the roes of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my Love until he please;* Or, as in better words, and more properly expressed: *I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, that ye stir not up nor awake my Love, by the hinds, or by the roes of the field, until He please.* These are the light-footed imaginations, in which, perhaps, the mind may be in some measure animated, and stirred up to duty, but have wandered into the mountains of vision, and there very frequently exercise themselves in acts of superficial devotion, the strict ob-

servation of exterior forms, and by this means are also lost in the fields of imagination; they loose the capacity of distinguishing betwixt that which is of a divine and heavenly nature, and the effects of an unstable mind: betwixt that universal righteousness of Christ, and a life in the various amusements of time; these are as the hinds and the roes of the field, and are not content to await the awakening of his love until he please. *Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye buy and eat; buy wine and milk without money and without price.*

O the riches of divine grace! that has thus abundantly favoured and blessed us with the celestial dew, which is of the bounteous mercy of *our Father that is in heaven,—without money and without price!* we have no equivalent wherewith to return the infinite obligation; we have none to plead with or depend upon, no claim of merit to avail ourselves of, but upon Him that sheweth mercy; with this consideration, we have no righteousness but of Him, no strength but in his strength; neither might nor wisdom but of Him; let him that glorieth, therefore, glory in this, that he that sheweth mercy hath imparted ability to perform the duties required at their hands.

And as there is no equivalent, in the returns of gratitude and thankful reverence, for all the glorious benefits we receive in the *light of his countenance*, and thus having no adequate strength of our own, may our continual dependence be on *the*

*Rock of Strength*, the support and help of His people.

There are some who would gladly avail themselves of knowledge and the strength of opinion, without a lively possession of that *faith that works by love to the purifying of the heart*. This will cast out every claim to merit, or of sufficiency, but what proceeds from HIM, *by whom are all things, and we by Him*.—*Wherefore spend ye your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not?* Here let us a little enquire into the state and progress of such disposed minds, who are negligently spending their “money for that which is not bread, and their labour for that which satisfieth not.”

What is the reason that the convinced of God are not so generally converted as might be?—It is because they too frequently apprehend themselves converted and healed in a state of unsoundness; these grow not up in a sense of divine knowledge and understanding of spiritual things; but instead of being confirmed in an holy fortitude, are led to pursue the uncertain mazes of folly, and are spending their *money for that which is not bread, and their labour for that which satisfieth not*.

And I think the reason of it may farther be thus understood, that it is for want of regarding this solemn injunction :

*Hearken diligently unto me.*

Alas ! too many whose minds have been measurably awakened to a sense of duty, are departing after inventions ; and by not attending to instruction from Him who speaks as never man spoke ; instead of following this voice that is perfect Wisdom, are engaged in a vain admiration of man.—*I am of Paul, I of Apollos, and I of Cephas.*—A language similar to this, introduced in the apostacy and seduction from the *Shepherd and everlasting Bishop of Souls*, has too evidently prevailed in the present age, with many who are idolizing persons ; I am of [this man, I am of the other man : I esteem such a one, and I follow the doctrine of such a teacher : This was a means where-with the enemy of christianity sought to obstruct the beauty of the primitive churches, and the same temptation is succeeding in our days.—*I am of Paul, I of Apollos, and I of Cephas :* and have not we these distinctions literally, in these days in which we live ?

But, I believe there are many whose minds, by the animating virtue of divine life, are brought to bear part in that universal groan and labour of all creation, which the apostle speaks of, and which is in measure alive in our days ; it was not to be unclothed, but to be clothed upon with a house from heaven : these are hearkening to, and following after the Shepherd and Bishop of souls, that endeavour to live in the obedience of faith, and in

the possession of that heavenly virtue, which furnishes to every good word and work.

There are some, who, unable to sustain the christian doctrine, are transferring it from one to another : these would gladly continue in the gratification of sense, and hope they can transfer it from themselves and fix it to another : they are ready to make an ample profession of religion, the shadowy performances of religion, in exterior duties ; but, alas ! they are fallen asleep in mysterious Babylon, and rest in a carnal presumption : but know there is a penetrating holy Eye beholds thee ! a voice is heard, *Awake, arise, and call upon thy God !* a language of this kind has been uttered by the great and heavenly Preacher, who searches the deep things of God, and discovers the mysteries of iniquity, and all the appendages of mystery Babylon are open to his view—*what meanest thou, O sleeper ! arise and call upon thy God :—*a call that seems applicable to the states of many in the present day, and Oh that it might be to the awakening them to a consciousness of sin, to a sense of duty ! and their eye be turned toward a Teacher and Instructor, the unerring Guide to glory !

But a fear attends me, lest too many are got asleep again, and dream a dream of unfelt truths ; are fallen fast asleep, in a profession of religion, a vocal acknowledgment, the labour of the tongue, with unsanctified hearts ; but *why spend ye your money for that which is not bread, and your labour*

*for that which satisfieth not?* Be convinced of the heavenly efficacy of Divine Grace, and ever retain a precious sense of its virtue on the soul. Why are you scattered abroad in the amusements of the flesh? Why is the work abortive, and the labours of the day obstructed? It has appeared to me to be a want of attention to the call of God: *Hearken diligently unto me*; this is the universal language of Wisdom. It is not to any who may be as subordinate teachers, as delegated shepherds, or servants to the flock, who are but men subject to the like passions with you, and are equally liable with you to the snares, difficulties, and jeopardies of their race: but our merciful Father has provided a safer dependence; for, as flesh hath the principle of natural life from the creation, for the animating virtue of Divine Life is imparted from the Son of God, by the immediate communication of his own Spirit, wherein is revealed all that is necessary for us to know: this is, as I conceive, the one important object of all our reverence, worship and praise.

“Wherefore spend ye your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.

Alas! how many are there, who might have been far advanced on their way to Mount Sion, the holy habitation of the saints' solemnity; nearer that celestial city, whose walls are salvation, and

her gates praise; who might have been sustained by the power of Almighty Wisdom and Strength, that now are in a feeble state, and incapable of proceeding on the arduous way towards eternal glory; they are turning back again, and are lost in the fields of imagination, in matters remote from their eternal interest, who might have been sharers of celestial wisdom, and admitted to tread in the courts of holiness.

*Hearken diligently unto me*, says the Eternal Word that was before words, and will remain when all language shall cease: in this is the acceptable oblation of worship and praise; and judgment is laid to the line, and righteousness to the plummet, by Him who is stronger than the strong man armed to cast him out, with all his goods, the gilded profession of the Christian name, in those who possess not its powerful heavenly virtue on the soul.

*Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good.* Oh, that the attention of mankind might be more solicitously engaged in the pursuit of *that which is good*, in the glorious benefits of the Christian faith! It is not in the false traffic of unfelt truths, but in the demonstration of the Spirit and with power. May all, therefore, continue to advance from grace to grace, and from one degree of strength to another, till our dependence be fixed on Him that fills the clouds and empties them at his pleasure.

We never shall be established as pillars in the house of God, nor never come up in the nobility and dignity whereto we are called, and to be as ornaments in families, until we have got beyond the superficial beauties of profession, and are engaged in the pursuit of essential good, in ardent pursuit after Divine Life. *The watchmen that go about the city found me, to whom I said, saw ye him whom my soul loveth?—it was but a little that I passed from them, I found Him whom my soul loveth;* and if we find not, we are found of Him who is cloathed with the celestial garment of wisdom. Continue this dependant watching state, on Him in whom are hid the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, who is not variable like man, but seeks the good of his soul by means of his own Spirit; not fallible like man, but unchangeable and everlasting are the attributes of wisdom and goodness: hear then his gracious invitation:—“Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and let him that hath no money, come ye buy and eat, yea come, buy wine and milk without money and without price; wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not? incline your ear, and hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.”

This was the language of Divine Wisdom, and I know it remains to be so, to many who are visited by its power, in the days of distress, and in the time of youth, when raised up by a measure

of divine approbation sealed to their minds ; thus many are brought to partake of the Fountain of Infinite Goodness ; and being admitted to an acquaintance with the God that made them ; these, through constrained love, have been engaged to pronounce the glad-tidings of salvation, and in the simplicity of the gospel, to direct to the Spirit of Christ, the light and life of man, as the doctrine of eternal redemption, and through divine assistance of the Holy Spirit, have been made instrumental in reviving a dependance upon Him alone, and not upon external acts, but to obedience to the universal Parent of mankind.

*Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.*

May this be the glorious attainment of your experience, and may your minds with attention, hear the voice of Him that speaks as never man spake ; it speaks home to thy state, and will be with thee when no eye is near : it will tell thee all that ever thou hast done, shews through the false glosses put upon acts, and is a distinguisher of the precious from the vile. It is a voice of approbation to the thirsty soul, a voice behind thee, saying, *this is the way, walk in it ; but little children, keep yourselves from idols.* Look to the holy Jesus, the word of life and eternal wisdom ; for I believe there are many in whom a divine thirst has been raised after the good that perishes not, and these the Lord of all power would satisfy with the good

things of eternal life, who are willing to come under the chastening of his hand.

When the idolized objects of sense, or any appearance whatsoever has obstructed the manifestation of this their morning light, alas! too many depart from a spiritual communion of faith in Christ, and lean on man; I am of such a one, I am of this or the other persuasion, and thus are professing godliness, without the power and wisdom of God. But the Author of divine wisdom has ever imparted an increase of strength, to all who trust in his Name, and that faithfully depend upon him; but his curse is gone forth against the impenitent and obdurate soul, and if God hath cursed, who shall bless? therefore *keep yourselves from idols*. Live to Him that is able to keep and to preserve you from evil, for he hath mercifully called you to hearken diligently, that ye might "eat that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." This is what I wish for, with that ardor that covers my spirit for your welfare, the increase of righteousness, and the promotion of Christian knowledge amongst you; for I have no doubt but he would still beautify the place of his feet, as we grow up and uniformly adorn the gospel of God, the Saviour of the world, who are pursuing the path of wisdom and truth, and that proceed in the *beauty of holiness, and in newness of life*.

*Add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and unto knowledge temperance. These*

excellent duties would have been joined together, but that some have broken the chain, and have added to their faith a degree of self-confidence, and unto knowledge, pride that puffeth up ; for though it extend from the *hysop on the wall, to the cedars of Lebanon*, it may yet be the work of an unsanctified heart. Thus many are grown great in religious knowledge, and in religious matters, and at the same time are destitute of its virtue ; but as the *hinds and the roes of the field* have not added temperance to their knowledge, not sufficiently observed the beautiful connexion there is between these two pillars, and the respective places they bear in the holy and beautiful house of Christianity, and these seven capital pillars which distinguish it. “ Add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness, brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity ; for if these things be in you and abound, they make you neither barren nor unfruitful ; but fruitful in all things through the Christian knowledge.”

May this be the glorious attainment of each within the audience of my voice, who have received a measure of divine grace ; may you be brought to partake of the heavenly gift, and may *your soul delight itself in fatness*, and be prepared for an inheritance in the world to come, in the eternal fruition of ineffable joy !

May you, my brethren and sisters in profession, with ardour endeavour to lay hold on wisdom and

virtue; you live amongst an enquiring people, who are asking the way to Sion, the city of the living God, and they want some means of instruction, arising from the influence of example in lives and conduct.—The people are desirous after good, their expectation leans towards an enduring hope—You, many of you, have been abundantly favoured with the visitation of Divine Regard, and some have had to point to others the way of peace.

But alas! a want of charity has prevailed in many, that wounds the cause of our profession. A walking contrary to the established principles, has made heavy work amongst us as a Christian society. An assiduous engagement in the apostatising spirit of the world, its licentious pursuits, and an inordinate love of its pleasures, wherein too many are involved.—But I trust there is a time at hand, when He will make *his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire*; when we may be distinguished amongst the people, by a more zealous activity in the cause of truth, and more concerned for the promotion of the cause of God on earth; that through Divine Power, many may have to say, *Follow us as we follow Christ*: May we thus, as ardent watchmen, sustain the duties of the day; may we steadily advance in the enlargement of divine experience, and as lifted up in eminency of virtue, be qualified to answer the enquiring soul, *Come up, hither, and I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife*; this, my brethren and sisters, is what I wish for, in order that when the *great Shepherd shall appear, you may also ap-*

*pear with him in glory*; may be so enabled to adorn the gospel of God on earth, that you may become as a city set on a hill, conspicuous in its glory and appearance among mankind.

But practice in too many hath not been equal with knowledge; (as hath been said,) they are grown great and high in religious matters, and are destitute of its virtues, or that holiness and purity religion calls for; very lamentable is the condition of such; but be established in the gospel of godliness; *gird up the loins of your minds, be sober and hope to the end*: let the youth amongst us *blow the trumpet*, to those who have wandered in deserts, and in *mountains, and in dens, and in caves of the earth*; may this be the engagement of the rising generation, for great is the cause of God, and it is under a sense of our heavenly Father's love, I wish the enlargement of wisdom, the increase of divine experience amongst us as a people, as well as amongst all societies; that the kingdoms of the earth may become the kingdom of the holy Jesus, established in righteousness and peace forever.

Suffer me to conclude with an affectionate address to the rising youth.

Happy would it be, if an ardent solicitude after the good things of eternal life was more prevalent in your minds: *Would you dip your foot in oil?* Would you inherit eternal happiness? Would you be the joy of the present generation, and the staff of the next? Would you shine as the morning

stars, and unite with the sons of God that shout for joy ? *Hearken diligently, attentively hearken to the voice of your Creator, eat you that which is good, and let your soul delight in fatness :* may you wait upon Him that would redeem you from evil, that leavening virtue, the measure of divine grace, which would leaven into its own nature and similitude, in the image of Him that made you, and unite you as a member in his sanctified church and family !

Remember, upon you must shortly devolve a cause, greater than the cause of empires or of kingdoms, or the general state of mankind ; that you are to act for God upon earth, to shew forth his praise, and, as you increase in years, to mingle with the elder brethren, consistent with the office of the militant church, to make war in righteousness against the powers of darkness. Thus may you live to God, who will enliven and preserve here on earth, is my ardent wish for you, and may He afterwards receive you into glory !

*A Prayer at the conclusion of the meeting.*

THINE holy Eye beholds the solemn and awful reverence in which our spirits bow before thee. O, Thou who continually receives the tribute of praise from angels and the glorified assembly of saints ! in a sense of thy goodness and mercy, the fulness which fills heaven and earth, and in which thou art pleased to regard the workmanship of thy hand, and from day to day, and oftener than the day, to fill the clouds with showers of celestial blessings, and to visit in every sure mercy the various states and conditions of thy children, and of all such as look towards Thee, from the ends of the earth !

Most gracious and adorable Fountain of Mercy ! we humbly beseech Thee, in the name and in the Spirit of thy dear Son, to write instruction upon all our minds ! give us to ponder the excellency of thy loving kindness, and humble our minds in a sense of solemn gratitude, as the subject of what we render to Thee for all these thy mercies. Bring us home thus, O Lord ! into a connexion with thy family, and to this dispensation of thy glorious light, that we may come up to the place where prayer and praise are given in faith, and supplication is wont to be made.

Bless the profession of truth, the Christian religion, yet in a more general manner, and with the knowledge of its truth, humble their hearts under their various states. Draw into that which is within the veil : arise in the ministration of thy power, in the ministration of grace, and shake both heaven and earth, with all the subordinate glories of opinion, with all the beauties and excellencies of speculation ! Let thy judgments come on every hill, and open the door of Lebanon, that the fire may devour the cedars ; that all the might, the strength, and opinions of mankind, the superficial productions of unfelt truths, may more and more be shaken and removed, and the soul be gathered to that which is substantial, to a dependance upon Him, that speaks as never man spoke ! *Gather us, and we shall be gathered*, to Thee, the Fountain of Light, and of eternal life.

Thus collect us, we pray Thee, to thy word of life ; may it descend as dew, and celestial doctrine as tender rain, making fruitful to thy praise, and the enlargement of our experience and knowledge of thy truth, with increasing humility, and reverent walking before thee.

May it please Thee, O God of life ! yet more and more to arise, and spread the virtue of thy life upon the minds of the people, and in a peculiar manner, upon those who have measurably begun in the Spirit, who have known the day-star of thy light to arise in their minds, who have begun in the Spirit, and want to be made perfect in the

flesh, their fleshly labours, and activity. But, O Lord God of power ! “ arise and let thine enemies be scattered, that we may come up before Thee in the beauty of holiness, and in newness of life, in amiable walking in circumspection, and cloathed with the spirit of righteousness ;” thus may Thou yet bring up the church as out of the wilderness, and many may have to see thy glory, and to rejoice in it.

Thus, *O Father which art in heaven !* enable us, with the united sacrifice of thanksgiving, to render to Thee the attributes of praise, and to hallow thy great and excellent Name ! may it come before Thee an acceptable oblation ! And it is in view of unspeakable mercy, we entreat that *thy will may be done in us as it is in heaven*, with a perfect mind, *and forgive us our trespasses*, blot out all our transgressions : thus, O Lord ! dress thou our garden, and come, and save thy people with thy everlasting salvation ! be with us in the exercises and difficulties of our race, help us along through this uncertain state, cloathe thy people with thy salvation, and be the desire of the nations, their peculiar glory who delight in Thee !

It is to Thee, the former of heaven and earth, with reverence we repeat a portion of holy, humble worship ; it is to Thee that makes *the clouds thy chariots, that walketh on the wings of the wind, that layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters*. It is to Thee, whose name we cannot speak, whose praise angels cannot sufficiently celebrate ;

it is to Thee, whom none can comprehend to the full, the glories of thy name, we lift up our hearts with our hands in the solemn act of humble worship, intreating that we may acceptably speak thereof, and ascribe the praise to Thee : *for thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for evermore. Amen.*

FINIS.













